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HISTORY.

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DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL IDEAS IN BENGAL, 1858 - 1884.

(Abstract of a thesis)

The introduction of Western education stirred the minds of Bengali youths, and brought about an intellectual revival. They passed at one bound from orthodox Hinduism to atheism, drunkenness, beef-eating, and a blind love of all that came from the West. This violent movement was moderated by the influence of Christian missionaries and the Brahmo Samaj.

Some of these Indians became politically conscious, and founded the Bengal British India Society with the help of George Thompson, who had already formed a similar body in England. The society languished and was absorbed by the British Indian Association, established by the Bengal landowners in 1851. This Association developed certain political ideas, and frequently petitioned Government, but, having failed to establish itself on an all-India basis, yielded ground to the rising middle classes, stirred by the ideas of Mill and the emotions of Mazzini. Meanwhile, anti-British sentiments were spreading. The indigo riots of 1860 rose from economic discontent, but helped to foment political unrest. In the sixties, Indian leaders were pursuing projects of both political and

social reform. But by the middle of the next decade the struggle for social reform declined, the idea of Nationalism grew rapidly, and there arose the "Mother-cult". Bankim wrote the ANANDA MATH, later on to become the gospel of Terrorism. The press became a powerful instrument of political propaganda, and was helped by the development of transport and communications. The Indian Association was formed by the middle classes to support representations to Government by agitation among the people. The storms that raged over the Vernacular Press Act and the Ilbert Bill taught Indians the value of united and organised political action. In 1884 the forces were ripe for an all-India political movement, which found expression in the Indian National Congress.

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

(Faculty of Arts)

DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL IDEAS IN BENGAL, 1858 - 85.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER I.

THE INTELLECTUAL REVIVAL.

The introduction of Western learning into Bengal in the early years of the nineteenth century marked the first attempt of the British to cast an influence over the inner life of the Indian community. The attempt proceeded from three sources and three distinctive motives: the zeal of the missionary who wanted to spread the teachings of the Christia religion;[1] the enthusiasm of a group of educationists who, lik David Hare, were inspired by a desire to bring about "moral and political improvement";[2] The energy of the Anglicists in the Committee of Public Instruction, whose spokesman, Macaulay wanted to create "a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect".[3] The last motive never could have been realised, the first was realised within a narrow range; the second motive, that of moral and political improvement, apparently frustrated at the beginning, triumphed soon after the first half of the century was over.

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1. Ronaldshay, Heart of Aryavarta, p.19.
2. Calcutta Review, 1852, vol. 17, p.345.
3. Macaulay, Minute on education, Feb. 2, 1835, ap. Sharp, Selections from educational records, part I, p.116.

Western learning was the vehicle of ideas which brought about an intellectual revolution in Bengal. The mind of a section of the people was re-vitalized. These men set out to overthro the old values and traditions, and to do that effectively they undertook the important tasks of building up Societies and organizing public meetings, of developing the Bengal language and, above all, of widening the scope and elevating the tone of journalism.

The first generation of missionaries worked with much zeal, but obtained poor results. The modern era of missions in India began with the founding of the Serampore Baptist Mission in 1799.[1] The object was purely evangelical. No thought of bringing about a general cultural revival seems to have been cherished either by the famous Baptist missionary, William Carey, who has been rightly proclaimed by his numerous biographers one of the greatest missionaries of the time, or by his able colleagues, Marshman and Ward.[2] The "Serampore

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1. Calcutta Review, 1851, vol. 16, p.239. See also John C. Marshman, Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward; and Joshua Marshman, Brief Memoir relative to the operations of the Serampore missionaries.

2. The best biographies of Carey are G. Smith, Life of Willia Carey, and S.P. Carey, William Carey. A useful bibliography relating to Carey and the Baptist Missions will be found in John Taylor, Bibliographical and Literary Notices of William Carey.

Chiefs" were filled with expectation and delight when, after a year's labour, a carpenter named Krishnu Pale, who had received medical attention from them, came up to be baptized. They published a Memoir in his name.[1] In 1803 they baptized the first Brahmin, who, however, continued to wear the sacred thread for nearly three years after the occasion:[2] it was a day of prayer and thanksgiving in the Mission House. Preaching went on at full swing, and in the following years some more conversions were made. But the extent of success achieved by the missionaries who were resolved to Christianize India can be measured from the fact that after twenty-five years of strenuous preaching and the expenditure of thousands of pounds[3] there were in the whole of Bengal probably no more than three hundred converts[4] many of whom seem to have been Christian only in name. W. Adam a Unitarian missionary, stated in a letter that "pressure of

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1. Ward, Brief Memoir of Krishna-pal.

2. J.C. Marshman, op. cit., vol. 1, pp.176-77.

3. Statistics of annual expenses of the Baptist Mission in Serampore will be found in J.B. Myers, Centenary of the Baptist Missionary Society, pp.332-3.

4. Adam, Queries and Replies, p.26.

poverty" and "hope of gain" might have produced converts.[1] Rammohan Roy, who was at that time the best friend of Christianity among Indians, made a similar statement with much more emphasis. "To introduce a religion by means of abuse and insult" (of the gods and saints of the Hindus), he wrote in the Brahmanical Magazine "or by affording the hope of worldly gain, is inconsistent with reason and justice."[2] "It is my decided opinion", wrote Abbé Dubois, "that, under existing circumstances, there is no human possibility of converting the Hindoos to any sect of Christianity".[3]

The failure of the first generation of missionaries was due, according to Rammohun, to their dogmas and their persistent belief in Biblical miracles which, to the Hindus, seemed much less wonderful than those related of their own gods and saints.[4] The doctrines preached by the missionaries, he wrote, were less conformable with reason than those professed by the

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1. Ibid, p.34.
2. Rammohun Roy, English Works, pp.145-6.
3. Ibid, pp.877-8.
4. Ibid, p.484.

Muhammedans, and in several points were as absurd as the popular Hindu creed. There was, therefore, no rational inducement for either to lay aside their own doctrines and adopt those upheld by the Christians.[1] It is curious that popular Hinduism was shaken to its depths not by the powerful Serampore preachers, but by a small group of Bengali students who were decidedly anti-christian. "Idolatry", wrote Adam in 1824, "is falling into desuetude at least among the natives of Calcutta. This, however I do not attribute to the labours of the missionaries, as those who have relinquished it are ..... more opposed to them than even idolators."[2]

J.C. Marshman rightly claims that the Serampore missionaries struck an uncompromising blow on caste. The missionaries on the coast had timidly and injudiciously consented to the perpetuation of caste among their converts. The caste distinct had been retained in the solemnities of the holy communion; the Brahmin Christian received the elements before the Sudra. Care and his colleagues, however, were resolved to root out every vestige of caste from the Christian community they were rearing

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1. Ibid, p.881
2. Adam, op. cit., pp.23,50.
3. J.C. Marshman, op. cit. vol. 1, pp.176-7.

They deserve no little credit for introducing the idea of a casteless society. Unfortunately, however, this blow on the bulwark of Hinduism was weakened by the missionaries' ~~insistence on~~ zeal for proselytisation. The battle against caste, as that against superstitious thought, was left to be fought by the group of students who rose in revolt against all religion.

The great work performed at Serampore was the translation of the Bible into forty different languages, and the issuing, before 1840, of 212,000 volumes at a cost of £91,500.[1] After 1840 the work was taken up by the Bible Translation Society which spent in a half-century the sum of £105,656.[2] Abbé Dubois complained that the "extremely incorrect versions" issued by the Serampore press did not produce "the sincere conversion of a single pagan".[3] But Carey, who was a great linguist, in translating the Bible into Bengali, rendered an inestimible service to that language. He undertook this laborious task in the cause of Christianity: he succeeded in handing over to his religious opponents an instrument of expression which was, later to be sharpened and wielded by Hindu reformers against the Missionary movement itself. Even greater, perhaps, was the

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1. Myers, op. cit., pp.292-3.
2. Ibid, p.309.
3. Rammohun Roy, op. cit., pp.879.

service of the missionaries to the Bengali language in the shape of the monthly journal, Samachar Darpan, started on May 31, 1818, which contains a mass of material invaluable to the student of contemporary society.[1]

The Serampore College was founded in 1818, not primarily with the intention of spreading Western learning among the natives of Bengal. "A College ..... may, under the divine blessing, be of the utmost value to the establishment of genuine Christianity throughout India and Eastern Asia", the missionaries stated in a prospectus.[2] And elswehere - the "great object" was "that of effectually promoting the progress of vital Christianity"[3]. The missionary point of view becomes

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1. J.C. Marshman, op. cit., vol. II, pp.161-3. Two important volumes of classified extracts from the Samachar Darpan and other Bengali periodicals have recently been published by B.N. Banerji under the title, Sambadpatre Sekaler Katha.

2. College for the instruction of Asiatic Christian and other youth, pp.4,5. See also Ward, Missionary College, Serampor

3. Joshua Marshman, Brief Memoirs relative to the operations of the Serampore Missionaries, Bengal, p.19.

absolutely clear in a statement of Ward. "The College we are building", he wrote, "rests on the same principle we have acted on for years, to make India evangelize herself and the surrounding peoples. We carefully avoid whatever might evangelize our students and converts".[1]

The first Missionary College in India paid too much attention to the study of Sanskrit and far too little to that of English. The study of Sanskrit was necessary, since "it was the depository of those doctrines which Christianity was to subvert". Besides, the knowledge of Sanskrit would give to preachers the advantages of learning which were then enjoyed exclusively by the pundits.[2] The desire to launch an attack on the citadel of Brahmanism turned the Serampore missionaries into staunch orientalists. Their policy defeated their purpose. Nor did abuse of the Hindu shastras help the cause of the gospel. Six years after the founding of the Serampore College, W. Adam stated that the best way to spread Christianity was not to seek a few converts, who would be despised by their own countrymen, but to preach rationally while diffusing sound knowledge, exciting a spi of enlightened enquiry, and throwing "the mass into a state of

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1. S.P. Carey, William Carey, p.328.

2. J.C. Marshman, Life and Times, vol. II, pp.171-2.

fermentation".[1] This task was left to be performed by the missionaries of a later generation, the most notable among whom was a man of exceptional talents, Alexander Duff.

Entrusted by the Committee of Foreign Missions in Scotland with the task of founding a College, Duff reached Calcu on May 27, 1830.[2] It was a time of deep unrest. The minds of the intelligent youths of the city were passing through a revolutionary change. The young missionary from St. Andrews contemplated the scene with joy and fear: he was filled with joy to see the renaissance, the shattering of age-worn prejudices, relaxation of caste bonds and the diminution of the power of the priesthood; on the other hand, he saw with alarm the spread of atheism and a general religious indifference. On July 13,1830 he opened the General Assembly's Institution with five pupils; these had been found for him by Rammohun Roy who also helped him various other ways. The remarkable abilities of Duff and the circumstance that no fees were charged soon filled the school wi hundreds of students. The deep learning of ~~the~~ to founder, his powerful eloquence and boundless energy, his remarkable tact in

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1. Adam, op. cit., p.63.

2. G. Smith, Alexander Duff, I, p.84.

developing the mental powers of his pupils and filling them with a thirst for knowledge made him a rare instructor of youth and secured wide recognition for his school.[1]

Duff's life from the day of his arrival in Calcutta to the day of his final departure in 1863, was given to ceaseless labour which won the admiration even of those who had no sympathy with his work. Besides managing his school and teaching for many hours every day, he delivered in his own house weekly lectures on religion, and founded the Calcutta Christian Observer to draw in converts from the ranks of atheism.[2] When Lord William Bentinck adopted Macaulay's views and recorded the famous Resolution of March 7, 1835, declaring that the object of the British Government "ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India", Duff said in a General Assembly speech: "The English language is the lever which, as the instrument of conveying the entire range of knowledge, is destined to move all Hindustan".[3]

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1. L.B. Day, Recollections of A. Duff, 23 - 6, 48.

2. Ibid, pp.34-35.

3. Ibid, 61-2. See, also, Duff, New Era of the English Language and Literature in India.

A new milestone in the history of the Christian religion in India had been reached. The oldest of the missionaries had ceased to be an orientalist. The study of English had replaced Sanskrit. This innovation brought down upon Alexander Duff a storm of criticism, but he remained unmoved, with the firm conviction that nothing was better fitted than Western knowledge to undermine Hinduism. It was not long before he gained numerous adherents to his views. Broken down in health he returned to his own country in 1834 and spent the next six years touring and lecturing. His triumph was complete. Not only did his plan secure general approval, but a new interest was awakened in the cause of Indian missions.[1]

Meanwhile, a different set of forces were rapidly at work. Atheism had swept the student community of Calcutta. The Hindu College was the storm centre of irreligious thought. Duff set his mind to finding the direction and measuring the strength of the forces that worked around him, and came to a clear conclusion. He combated the view that English education would inevitably make Indians atheistic and anti-Christian. The Hindu College had produced bitter fruits, he said, because it

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1. See article on Duff in the Dictionary of National Biography, vol. 16, pp.125-8. See also Duff, Missionary Addresses.

communicated the knowledge which destroyed without supplying that which would build. Its very existence furnished a strong argument for the establishment of a new institution - "its co-ordinate and rival as an intellectual gymnasium, its unrivall superior as the nursery of religion and morals". The study of European literature had driven the students into the ranks of atheism. Here was a new power which threatened to become more formidable than idolatry itself. Unless the missionaries increased their exertions tenfold, atheism and not Christianity would be the power that would cause the downfall of Hinduism. This new anti-idolatrous and anti-Christian power could be resisted by means of a superior Christian College which would raise another race of young men who would have their minds imbue with the spirit of scientific enquiry and controlled by the principles of the Christian religion.[1]

The labours of Duff and his associates brought a tide in the affairs of Christianity in Bengal. An outstanding figur among the atheists of the Hindu College accepted the gospel. Krishna Mohan Banerji was one of the first Bengali intellectuals who changed their faith. Nor was the conversion of Lal Behari

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1. Duff, India and India Missions, p.522-4.

Day, a brilliant student of the General Assembly's Institution less noteworthy for its effects. Lal Behari Day was one of the first Indians who abandoned the rhetorical English style then in use, and taught himself to write "King's English"; he was also the foremost Christian to accept the challenge of the Brahmo Samaj and lead a campaign against it on behalf of his own religion.

But the very progress of Christianity[1] gave rise to the forces which were destined to check it. Hinduism, which was, to Duff's mind, "so huge a compound of all that is false, monstrous and extravagant"[2], had an immense source of reserve strength. Under the threat of Christianity, it reformed and renewed itself. The Brahmo Samaj began to grow rapidly only when Christian thought in India had developed. The greatest contribution of the missionaries to Indian cultural life was probably this: they gave vitality and aggressiveness, without the least intention of doing so, to an indigenous movement, which, expressing itself as much through a zeal for social as for religious reform, ~~was soon~~ began to spread ~~to~~ all over India.[3]

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1. In 1852 there were in India nearly 103,000 converts. See The Urgent Claims of India for more Christian Missions, by a Layman in India, p.16.

2. Duff, India and India Missions, p.269.

3. G.O. Trevelyan wrote: "The nature of the process by which the weeds of Brahmanism are rooted out and cleared away doe not prepare the ground favourably for the reception of the

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The second source of Western learning, the zeal of educationists, was preceded by the enterprise of several Eurasian whose motive was economic rather than philanthropic. Notable among these were Sherbourne and Martin Bowles. Many Bengalis who became distinguished later had been educated in their schools for instance, Dwarkanath Tagore in Sherbourne's, Moti Lal Seal in Martin Bowles'.[1] The education consisted almost solely in committing English words and their meanings to memory. Little attention was paid to grammar and idiom. In the schools mention above it was the custom to make the pupils learn by heart a certa

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Footnote from previous page continued:-

> seed of Christianity. . . . . An (educated) native must regar the astronomy and geography of his old religion with a contem which will very soon include that religion itself. But when he has surrendered his ancient creed because the priests of that creed are at strife with the European astronomers, is he likely to accept a new creed whose priests are at strife with the European geologists? Until our clergymen make their peac with Huxley, they must not expect to meet with any success among the educated Hindoos". G.O. Trevelyan, Competition Wallah, p.305. Another writer stated: "Educated India does n see its way to Christianity. It cannot reconcile itself to a revealed religion: the miracles seem to be a stumbling block". India Before and After the Mutiny, by an Indian Student, pp. 98-9.

1. See ~~also~~ article in Cal. Rev., 1850, vol. 13, "Educational Establishments of Calcutta past and present".

number of words every day. It is said that the Serampore missionaries, in giving certificates to their students, stated how many English words they knew. English-educated youths would thus ask their names of each other: "What denomination put your papa?" In social gatherings they would test each other's knowledge by asking the spelling of such words as Xerxes Kamschatka and Nebuchadnezzar.[1] The knowledge of English had become a hall-mark of social status. It was, besides, a passport to respectable positions.[2] In the absence of opportunities for a proper training, the students were content to acquire a smattering. The desire for English education, wrote Ram Mohun Roy, was to be found even in the lowest classes.[3]

The year 1817 heralded a far-reaching change, being the year when the Hindu College was established. David Hare and Ram Mohan Roy had organised meetings of the chief Hindus of Calcutta, held in the house of the Chief Justice of the Supreme

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1. R.N. Bose, Sekal-ar-Ekal, p.19.
2. Lethbridge, ~~op. cit.~~ Ramtanu Lahiri., p.57.
3. Ram Mohun Roy, English Works, p.883. For an account of t first Bengalis who learnt English see R.C. Sen, Preface to A Dictionary in Eng. & Bengalee, p.17.

Court, Sir Edward Hyde East. A Committee had been formed, consisting of Europeams and Indians, and subscriptions collected. But Ram Mohan soon withdrew from the movement, strong objections having been raised by his orthodox countrymen to his association with it. On January 20, 1817, the Hindu College began its work.[1] Though founded and controlled mainly by orthodox Hindus, the College rapidly produced a band of students who rose in revolt against the old order and made the educational institution a stronghold for ideas which were foreign and startingly new.

Lord Ronaldshay rightly observes that the wave of irreligion which a little later overtook the student community of Bengal was the inevitable result of pouring new wine into old bottles, rather than the outcome of the influence of certain individuals.[2] But if certain individuals are at all to be held responsible for this they no doubt would be Hare, a watch-maker from Dundee, and Derozio, the most influential teacher in the new institution. The "Friend of India", the journal of the Serampore missionaries, spoke highly of Hare's educational work, but regretted that his influence produced in the mind of the

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1. For an account of the origin of the Hindu College, see P.C. Mitra, Biographical sketch of David Hare, pp.5-15.

2. Ronaldshay, op. cit., pp.17-18.

Indian youth an indifference to religion and a general scepticism. The Calcutta Review wrote of him as an "ill-educated man with narrow views," who had got hold of a grand idea. It also said that no European had ever mixed so freely and familiarly with the people of Bengal.[2] Hare was destined to stand out as one of the greatest pioneers of Western learning in India. He was, besides, one of the two or three men in Bengal working for freedom of thought. He had discarded the dogmas of religion, preferring to follow the guidance of ethics alone. The following incident was significant. Lal Behari Day, a student in the General Assembly's Institution, wanted to be admitted into Hare's school, so that he could later gain admission into the Hindu College. He went to David Hare and begged ~~for the favour~~ to be taken in. Hare replied: "All Mr. Duff's pupils are half Christians. I won't take any of them in my school. I won't take you; you are half Christian; you will spoil my boys".[3]

Even Hare's influence on the mind of the Bengali student, however, did not outstrip that of a youth of twenty, Henry Deroz. Hare was more enthusiastic than learned. He was more of an organizer than a teacher. He prepared the way along which Dero

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1. P.C. Mitra, op. cit., pp.78-9.

2. Calcutta Review, 1852, vol. 17, pp.345,350. See also M.N. Sircar, Life of Peary Churn Sircar, pp.6,7.

3. Macpherson, Life of L.B. Day, pp.20,22.

was soon to sweep in a blaze of glory, for Derozio had in good measure what Hare lacked: learning. A Eurasian of Portuguese extraction, Derozio was born in Calcutta on April 10,1809.[1] He was educated in the school of David Drummond, who, besides being deeply learned in European literature and science, was an advocat of freedom of thought. The name of Drummond is now almost forgotten. Yet he did much to raise the standard of education of his time to a higher level. The Europeans of Calcutta, however, were afraid to send their sons to a school managed by a free-thinker.[2] Drummond had no little influence on young Derozio's mind. Leaving school at the age of fourteen, the boy worked in an office for some time, then gave it up and devoted himself to reading and contemplation. He wrote articles for "The India Gazette" edited by Dr. Grant. In November 1826 he joined the Hindu College as a junior teacher.[3] The power of his pen had already given him an influence disproportioned to his years. The vigour of his personality enabled him to cast a spel

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1. Edwards, Derozio, p.2.

2. Deb, Early History and Growth of Calcutta, p.96; see also Calcutta Review, 1850, vol. 13, pp.450-1.

3. Calcutta Review, 1852, vol. 17, p.352. According to Edward he joined the college in March, 1828. See Edwards, op. cit p.30.

not only over his pupils but also over the intellectual society of Calcutta. A great enthusiast himself, he had the gift of imparting enthusiasm to others. Under him the acquisition of knowledge became a pursuit of absorbing interest. Not content with teaching in the College, he used to invite his pupils to his house and gave evening after evening to discussion and debat This social intercourse promised to create a bond of sympathy between the two races.[1] It is curious that Derozio, the free-thinker, had much in common with the missionary, Alexander Duff. Though differing completely in their religious opinions, both were able teachers and powerful intellectuals who desired to rouse the minds of their pupils to a state of ferment. And both succeeded in their object. Duff wanted to make Christians Derozio was anxious to break the power of all religions: and bot succeeded in their object. There is no doubt, however, that th success of Derozio was far more spectacular. He did in two yea what Duff took two decades to do. Circumstances were in Derozi favour. It is probable that even if he had not been born, the results with which his name is so intimately associated, would have been achieved.

The first glimpse into the science and literature of the Western world filled Bengali students with astonishment and

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1. Bradley Birt, Derozio, Introduction; p.XXXII. See also Anglo-India, vol.II, p.36.

delight. Ideas derived from the samhitas and puranas were found to be hollow and often false: they became iron chains which, at any cost, had to be broken. The young enthusiasts of the Hindu College were determined to cut themselves adrift from the ancient culture of their race. Derozio encouraged them to make full use of their newly found mental freedom, and, by an extraordinary domination over their thoughts, turned them into bold iconoclasts and fiery reformers.[1]

"We have heard of scandalous orgies, where the most sacred mysteries and persons in the Gospels were parodied and blasphemed by English gentlemen for the amusement of the young Hindus", a writer stated in the Calcutta Review. "And it is notorious that their notions of the religion of Jesus were drawn chiefly from Paine's 'Age of Reason', and the pages of Gibbon and Hume".[2] The Bengali student's dislike of Christianity was only second to their dislike of Hinduism.

This irreligion appeared on the crest of a wave which touched many other aspects of the mind.[3] The spirit of enquiry

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1. Calcutta Review, 1852, vol. 17, p.352.
2. Ibid, p.354.
3. Anglo-India , vol. II, pp.84-87.

stalked in the corridors of the Hindu College. Derozio formed his Academic Association, a Debating Society in which social problems were fearlessly discussed. A student, Umacharan Bose, was its first secretary. Krishna Mohan Banerji, Ram Gopal Ghose and other senior students addressed its meetings. The proceedings of the Association attracted so much public attentio that men like David Hare and Dr. Mills, Principal of Bishop's College[1] used to attend the meetings and listen to the discussion with much interest.[2] The influence which it produced on the Bengali mind is obvious from the fact that about a dozen newspap were started to discuss the views promulgated by the Association. Among these, "The Parthenon" was notable; it was stopped by the order of Dr. Wilson, whose voice to a great extent controlled the College Committee.[4] The Association was afterwards removed to Hare's school and Hare was elected president. Meetings were held once a week.[5]

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1. It was founded by Bishop Middleton on December 15,1820, with the co-operation of the Society for the propagation of the Gospel. See Deb. op. cit., p.106.

2. Edwards, op. cit., pp.31-2.

3. Calcutta Review, April 1926, p.129.

4. Mitra, op. cit., p.16.

5. Ibid, p.64.

The Academic Association levelled a bold and uncompromising attack on Hinduism, denouncing it as vile and corrupt. It was declared that nothing but Western education could liberate the intellect of the people from its fetters. The emancipation of women began to be discussed. But, above all, a war cry was raised against caste.[1]

The fire which had been smouldering for a decade burst into flames in the year 1829. In the swarm of debating societies that sprang up, modelled on the Academic Association, there was one universal execration of the Hindu religion.[2] The students then carried the conflict into their homes, and the fathers of many were dismayed to find that education had induced their sons to renounce the ancient faith. Not a few Brahmin students were thrust into the family sanctuary and left there with the hope that the deity would bring them back to the religious way. When this failed, the embittered guardians took to persecution. Many youths had to leave their homes and seek shelter elsewhere.[3] As the months passed, the gulf between the old generation and the new became wider, and more frequent was the cry: "Down with orthodoxy, down with tradition". An incide brought matters to a crisis. In 1831, a student of the Hindu

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1. Edwards, op. cit., pp.41,68. See also Majumdar, Life and Teachings of K.C. Sen, p.7.

2. Calcutta Review, 1852, vol. 17, p.353-4.

3. See Mitra, op. cit., p.28.

College threw roast beef into a neighbouring Brahmin's house, shouting to the horrified inmates, "Beef! Beef!"[1]

The Managing Committee of the College had already passed a resolution prohibiting teachers from trying to unsettle the religious faith of the students. But the rising tide of irreligion could not be checked. Then the Committee took revenge on Derozio regarding him as "the root of all evil".[2] Among the members of the Committee was Dewan Ram Comul Sen, the author of the first comprehensive English and Bengali dictionary, "a member of every learned society in Calcutta", and an eager supporter of Western learning. His admiration for progressive ideas did not prevent him from siding with his orthodox colleagues. The majority of them passed a resolution dismissing Derozio.[3]

But the influence of Derozio, "the master-spirit of this new era",[4] did not cease with his removal from the Hindu College. The spring of 1831 saw his return to journalism, quickly followed by the founding of "The East Indian". His home remained, as before, the meeting-place of young Hindu reformers. But suddenly

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1. Calcutta Review, 1852, vol. 17, p.357.
2. Ibid, p.358; see also P.C. Mitra, op. cit., pp.17 et seq.
3. Bradley-Birt, ~~F.B.,~~ Introduction, Poems of Derozio, pp.XXXIX.
4. Calcutta Review, 1852, vol. 17, p.352.

the end came. The rainy season of that year brought an appaling epidemic of cholera. On December 17, Derozio caught the disease. Six days after, he died, surrounded by the pupils who loved him, in his twenty-third year.[1]

The Managing Committee of the Hindu College was wrong in fixing upon Derozio as the root of all evil. No man could have created the restlessness, the spirit of enquiry and independence. It was an inevitable result of the new learning, in the light of which the old appeared worn and shrivelled.[2] But Derozio, no doubt, helped to bring out the contrast; and he gave form to ideas of which his students had been dimly conscious. It was probably he who had introduced to Bengali youths the works of Paine and Hume.[3] At the same time it ought to be remembered that the struggle in the Hindu College was part of a general struggle which was going on outside under the guidance of Ram Mohan. On December 4,1829, Lord William Bentinck issued his edict against suttee. And a few days after this Ram Mohan's Brahmo Samaj met for the first time in the house newly built for its use.[4] The Samaj had

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1. See obituary published by the Samachar Darpan ap. Edwards, op. cit., pp.177-8.

2. Madge, Memoir, ap. Shah, Poetical Works of Derozio, p.V.

3. Some parts of Paine's "Age of Reason" were translated into Bengali. See Edwards, op. cit., p.35.

4. K.C. Mitra, Memoir of D.N. Tagore, p.28.

been formed the year before, and held weekly meetings at which the Vedas were expounded and religious discourses were delivered. The excitement it created was well-proportioned to the magnitude of the change aimed at by its founder. That the veil of mystery should be torn from the Vedas and their contents revealed to those who had been strictly precluded by the priestcraft; that the holy Gajatri should be pronounced not only before the Sudra but, worse still, before the mlechha; nothing was more calculated to shock the feelings of Hindus and impel them to adopt strenuous measures.

The forces working against orthodoxy had built up forms of organization. The students had the Academic Association and other debating societies. Ram Mohan had his Brahmo Samaj. The Government itself had shown favour to the cause of reform. The orthodox Hindus of Calcutta were panic-stricken. They rose from their self-complacent slumber, and established the Dharma Sabha, having become alive to the usefulness of a compact, aggressive Society.

The newly awakened spirit, Alexander Duff has written, might spring at one bound from the extreme of orthodoxy to the extreme of atheism. Exhausted by its own convulsive efforts, the sceptical spirit might become stripped of all vital energy; while as in the case of other revolutions, its very excesses and

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1. Calcutta Review, 1845, vol. 4, pp.375

indiscriminate outrage might produce a powerful reaction in favour of the ancient creed.[1] The Dharma Sabha, which began rapidly to grow in strength, must have been helped by the irreligious excesses of the students. But it was equally helped by the desire of orthodox Hindus to combat the reformed religion of Ram Mohan. The noise of fierce controversy echoed throughout the country. The Hindu community became divided into two great parties, the atheists standing apart from either of them, though they had only enmity for one and sympathy for the other.[2] The Dharma Sabha became powerful and opposed every liberal measure. Under the guidance of Raja Radakanta Deb it presented a petition against the abolition of suttee.[3] Later, it petitioned against the abolition of that section of the Hindu Law which inflicted forfeiture of ancestral property on Hindus renouncing their religion.[4] A newspaper named Samachar Chandrika was started to uphold orthodoxy. One of the targets of its attack was the Hindu College itself.

The extent of bitterness and despondency can be gauged from the fact that attempts were made more than once on the life of Ram Mohan Roy. But the founder of the Brahmo Samaj was a patient

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1. Duff, India and India Missions, p.269.
2. Anglo-India, vol. II, pp.82-85.
3. Samachar Chandrika, April 12, April 15, May 13, July 22, September 20, and October 18, 1830.
4. Calcutta Review, 1845, vol. 4, p.376; and vol. 3, pp.360-1,3

fighter. And his fight, while differing completely in techniqu from the impatient struggle of the students of Calcutta led by an inspired teacher, had points of contact with it. For the wa was waged against a common enemy, the forces of mediaevalism.[1] The points of contact, however, were few and the divergences numerous and wide. While the students were the vanguard of a disruptive movement, Ram Mohan Roy, by temperament a reformer and not a revolutionary, was striving to build.[2] While the students lost discretion and accepted from Europe almost as much evil as good, Ram Mohan made no such mistake.

The intellectual revival brought about more than three decades of anarchy and chaos marked throughout not only by a strenuous attempt to blacken the country's past and denounce religion and tradition, but by excesses such as throwing beef into the houses of orthodox Hindu neighbours, by licentiousness and drinking. The Oriental Magazine said that the young students were "cutting their way through ham and beef, and wadin ..... to liberalism through tumblers of beer"[3] Pratap Majumda has given a graphic account of the conditions existing in 1858.

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1. Pal, A Short Account of the Life of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, p.7.
2. Ram Mohan deplored the growth of atheism among the students. See Calcutta Review, 1845, vol. 4., p.390.
3. Majumdar, Life and Teachings of Keshub Sen, p.10.

Hindu society was in absolute disorder. The type of character known as 'Young Bengal' was fully developed. Scepticism still infected the rising generation and morals had crumbled.[1] Education had degenerated, or had never developed into anything higher than a frivolous pursuit of rhetoric and dilettantism. Young Bengal had become both de-nationalised and demoralized.[2] The exclusive study of a foreign language had resulted in the total neglect of Bengali. The industrious student of Shakespeare and Milton could hardly spell his name in his own mother-tongue.[3]

It cannot be assumed that by the year 1858 the seeds of progress sown three decades ago had sprouted, flowered and withered away. All through these years advanced social ideas developed more and more, and along with them also developed the inherent germs of decay. And after the Mutiny, as before it, the two developments continued. In 1867 Lord Cranborne perceiv from a distance that India was in a state of transition. "The impression produced on my mind while I was at the India Office", he said, speaking in the House of Commons, "was that I was watching a vast community, . . . in the act of creation. The changes going on were so rapid; prejudices a thousand years old

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1. Ibid, pp.3,4.

2. Ronaldshay, op. cit., p.47.

3. Majumdar, op. cit., p.5. See also Calcutta Review, 1850, vol. 13, p.257. Compare with this the view that Young Bengal "helped to build an arch between the East and the West, and ..... served as interpreters of one great country to another". See Calcutta Review June 1924, pp. 526-7.

appeared to be so rapidly melting away; the agencies in operation were so powerful".[1] And along with this should be visualised, as part of the same picture, the evils of excessive intemperance. Since the days of Derozio the distinction between liberty and licence had been forgotten; the great cry of young enthusiasts was for culture; they fancied that no man might lay claim to culture unless he took beef and wine.

Chunder Nath Bose read a paper at a meeting of the Bethune Society, in which he discussed the effects of Western learning in Bengal. While admitting that in certain minds it had destroyed the root ideas of Hindu social life and created chaos and restlessness, he asked his audience to consider the nature and magnitude of the revolution through which the country was passing. This revolution, he said, was far more radical in its content, and far more comprehensive in its purpose than the greatest political revolution recorded in history. The French Revolution was the result only of political injustice and religio absolutism and produced deeds of unparalleled violence and atroci But Indians were living under tyrannies more numerous and more radically mischievous than those which brought about the great revolution in France. In India there were a social tyranny, a

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1. Hansard, 1867, vol. 187, 1075.

domestic tyranny, a tyranny of caste, a tyranny of custom, a religious tyranny, a tyranny of thought over thought, a tyranny of sentiment over sentiment. English education had opened the eyes of Indians to these tyrannies. They had more reason to be revolutionaries than the Frenchmen of the eighteenth century.[1]

It is obvious that Chunder Nath Bose did not fully realise the nature of the French Revolution, and saw the dimensions of the intellectual revolt in his own country through a magnifying glass. But the motive which led him to express the above sentiment was sound. It is idle to regret, as many writer have done, that the impact of Western learning brought about in Bengal a sudden upheaval instead of a slow change. The debris of social custom and tradition had to be cleared before progress could be achieved. Nothing but an enormous zeal could do it: and it is only natural - as the history of so many revolutions has shown - that when the passion for social or political change has risen to fever heat it should find outlet in excesses. One fact stands out above all else: the revolutionary youths of Bengal had delivered a staggering blow to a system that had maintained its strength through centuries. When the great passion cooled down and was replaced by a mild desire for reform, progress became difficult, slow and uncertain.

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1. C.N. Bose, High Education in India, pp.11 et. seq.

The founding of the Hindu College was, clearly, an event of great significance in the social history of Bengal. The succes of that institution gave rise to a number of schools run on the same principles. Notable among these was the Oriental Seminary, established by Gour Mohan Addy in 1823, and considered to be "next in excellence to the Hindu College". It had among its earlier batches of students Shambhu Nath Pandit, Akhay Kumar Dutt and W.C. Bonnerjea, who, respectively, distinguished themselves as a High Court Judge, a writer of Bengali prose and a Barrister.[1] The missionaries also opened a network of schools in which secular teaching received increasing attention. Other schools sprang up, conducted by young men who had been educated in the Hindu College.[2] In the same year in which that College was founded, the Calcutta School Book Society was established to meet the demand for English and other works.[3] It sold, between January 1834 and December 1835, 31,649 books.[4] The taste for English education had taken hold of the community. The schools, though

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1. Deb, op. cit, pp.97-98. See also Calcutta Review, 1850, vol.13, p.465.

2. C.E. Trevelyan, On the education of the people of India, pp. 8,81.

3. Deb. op. cit., pp.115-6. See also Samachar Darpan, Oct. 21, 1820, ap. B.N. Banerjee, Sambadpatra Sekaler Katha, I., p.3.

4. C.E. Trevelyan, op. cit., p.79.

rapidly increasing in number, could not accommodate all who clamoured for admission. On the opening of the Hoogly College in August 1836, twelve hundred names were entered in the registers for the department of English within three days.[1]

Efforts were also made for the cultural advance of women. The missionaries were pioneers in this direction. In 1819 the Calcutta Female Juvenile Society was founded for the support of Bengali girls' schools. It established a school with 32 students. Reading and writing and needlework were taught here.[2] But it was not until 1850 that a real start was given by Drinkwater Bethune to female education in Bengal.

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1. Idem, p.82. A writer in the Calcutta Review states that the resumption of rent-free lands in 1819 and 1825 caused severe distress in certain parts of the country and led to emigration into towns. The immigrants turned to English education as the means of securing employment. See Calcutta Review, Jan.1925, p.20.

2. Deb, op. cit., p.118. Schools for European girls had been in existence long before 1819. One of the most well-known was Mrs. Durrell's Seminary for girls. The first girls' school in Calcutta was probably established about the year 1770, by Mrs. Hedges. Its pupils were said to be "childish, vain, imperious, crafty, vulgar and wanton". See Rainey, A Historical and Topographical Sketch of Calcutta, p.60; also Calcutta Review, 1850, vol. 13, p.452.

An event next in importance only to that of the opening of the Hindu College was the establishment of a Medical College in Calcutta. Lord William Bentinck proposed to raise up a band of Indian doctors educated on sound European principles, who would take the place of dangerous quacks. For this a professional education was needed, but it was open to doubt whether Indians would submit to the conditions which medical education implied. A committee was appointed to enquire into the subject. After a careful investigation it reported in favour of educating Indian medical students on European lines. "Times are much changed", the Committee said. "and the difficulties that stood in the way appear no longer insurmountable".[1] It is significant that among the six members of the Committee there was one Indian, Ramcomul Sen, who, only four years before, had assisted greatly to secure Derozio's dismissal.

The point, however, had not been gained without a sharp opposition. The Superintendent of the existing medical institution,[2] an orientalist, argued that any attempt to remodel

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1. Trevelyan, C.E., op. cit., pp.28-29. See also Calcutta Review, 1844, vol. I, p.267.

2. Founded in 1822, it represented the first organised effort of Government to train up Indian doctors. The instructing staff consisted of a civil assistant surgeon and two native assistants. Lectures were delivered in Hindustani. The students had only a few short tracts, translated into that language, for their text books. The only dissection practised was on the lower animals. See Calcutta Review, 1866, vol. 42, p.116. For extracts from the Report submitted by the Committee, see C.E. Trevelyan, op. cit., Appendix.

was doomed to failure. Dr. Duff challenged this view. The battle which had been fought in the Committee of Public Instructio was fought over again in this new field.

The College was opened on June 1, 1835, for "the instruction of a certain number of native youths in the various branches of medical science". David Hare was appointed its secretary. The English system of education, in all its details, was adopted by it. Anatomy by dissection was introduced in face of a storm of orthodox opposition raised on the ground that it was an attempt to make the students Christians. Madhusudan Gupta was the first Bengali to handle the dissecting knife.[1] A heavy blow was thus delivered on one of the strongest prejudices of the age. Dwarkanath Tagore interested himself in the College from the beginning. When the anatomy class was first opened, he went there personally and witnessed dissection, so abhorrent to a Hindu and suppressed the spasm of sickness which he instinctively felt.[2] The students of the College made rapid progress: writing only thre years after the event, Charles Trevelyan said: "Operations, at the sight of which English students not infrequently faint, are regarded with the most eager interest, and without any symptom of

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1. Calcutta Review, 1866, vol. 42, p.118.
2. K.C. Mitra, Memoir of D.N. Tagore, p.120.

loathing, by the self-possessed Hindu."[1]

The year 1844 is memorable on account of the sending of four students of the Medical College to England to undergo a higher course of study there. Dwarkanath Tagore had first suggested the idea and had offered to pay all the expenses of two of them.[2] Hindu society of the time regarded the crossing of the Kala pani[3] (Black Water) with fear and hatred. Ram Mohun had done it. His example was followed by Dwarkanath himself in January 1841 when he went to England and was presented to the Queen and entertained by the Court of Directors.[4] On his return from Europe next year, the orthodox society of Calcutta, stirred to its depths, demanded that he should perform the expiatory ceremony of prayaschitta for having undertaken the ocean voyage and broken the caste rules through association with mlechhas. But Dwarkanath defied them, refusing to perform the ceremony,

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1. C.E. Trevelyan, op. cit., p.33.

2. Lethbridge, op. cit., p.106.

3. He was not, as is sometimes stated, the first high-caste Indian to go to England. Nearly forty years earlier, two Mahratta Brahmins had gone to England; on their return they performed the prayaschitta and were received back into caste. See Samachar Chandrika, Jan.20,1831.

4. Buckland, Dictionary of Indian Biography, p.412.

boldly faced the threat of excommunication and baffled the schemes of orthodox pundits.[1] No wonder, then, that he should frame projects of sending Indian students to England for higher education. Another great Bengali who took much interest in the movement was Ram Gopal Ghose. At a time when the courage of the students selected for the task might have faltered, Ram Gopal constantly offered them encouragement and advice. The night before the voyage he spent with them in the ship, and left it only when the ahcnor was about to be raised.[2] The four students, on their arrival in London, were admitted into the University College and "from that period their course was one uninterrupted course of triumph". Dr. Chakravarti, one of this brave band, attained no little distinction.[3]

Meanwhile, a new organisation had been formed. On March 12, 1838, in compliance with the wishes of Ram Gopal, Ramtanu Lahiri, Tarachand Chakravarti and others, a meeting of "Hindu gentlemen" was held at the Sanskrit College and the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge was established/

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1. R.C. Mitra, op. cit., p.106. Dwarkanath went to England again in 1845, was received as previously, and died on August 1, 1846.

2. Calcutta Review, 1868, vol. 46, p.512.

3. Ibid, 1866, vol. 42, p.120.

"with the object of promoting mutual improvement". It was resolved that monthly meetings were to be held, at which written or verbal discourses would be delivered on subjects previously chosen.[1] Religious discussions were debarred: the reason probably was that too much energy had already been spent in discussing religion. The Academic Association which had, a few years before, attacked Hinduism with great vigour, was still living, but had lost its hold on the younger generation. The new Society started with nearly two hundred members on its rolls, among whom were the most gifted young men of the day, including Krishna Mohan Banerji, Rejnarain Bose and Peary Chand Mitra. David Hare was the Honorary Visitor and Peary Chand Mitra and Ramtanu Lahiri were the Honorary Secretaries. The discourses were written mainly in English, but a few were composed in the vernacular. The Society published three volumes of selections from papers read at its meetings between the years 1840 and 1843. Among these were papers on the condition of Hindu women, dissection and social reform. The Society died about the year 1843, either of inanition or owing to an outburst of temper on the part of David Richardson[2] who was offended, when attending a meeting of the Society, to hear Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee denouncing the British Government in no

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1. P.C. Mitra, David Hare, pp.64-66.

2. Principal of the Hindu College and a distinguished writer, [illegible].

measured terms. Richardson nicknamed the Society the Tarachand Faction, after Tarachand Chakravarti, one of the founders and a prominent member, and an early representative of the anti-British feeling then beginning to emerge.[1]

The students of the Hindu College retained their love of debate even after the tide of religious reform had begun to ebb. "The young men ofthis institution have a debating club", and English writer stated in his 'Observations on India', "and I attended several of their discussions. They showed themselves well acquainted with the subject of controversy, and maintained their peculiar views on the subject of it with a great deal of zeal and ingenuity. The youth of some English institutions might be able to write better Greek or Latin verses, on a given subject, but I question whether they could treat of it with more sound sense and acuteness".[2]

Educational institutions and debating societies were not the only gateways through which Western ideas marched into Bengal. A third gateway, one of great importance, was the press. The first Indian newspapers were, in fact, concerned much less with news than with views; the development of social and political thought was, to a great extent, an outcome of their growth and

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1. Calcutta Review, April 1926, pp.130-1.

2. Observations on India, by a resident there, pp.27-8.

influence.

In the earlier days the purpose of newspapers had been served by bazar gossip. 'Private newspapers' in manuscript form were also in vogue. Such akhbars were circulated during the ~~century~~ meeting.[1] Bengali typography was first introduced in the year 1778, when N.B. Halhed,[2] grammar was printed. Halhed was so proficient in colloquial Bengali that he was said to have disguised himself in native dress and passed as a Bengali in assemblies of Hindus.[3] The types for this book were prepared by Sir Charles Wilkins who has been rightly called the Caxton of Bengal.[4] The Serampore missionaries were the first to set up an efficient vernacular press, and one of the earlier works printed in Bengali was Carey's translation of the New Testament (1801). The first Bengali periodical, The Bengal Gazette,[5] was started in 1816 by Gangadhar Bhattacharji (Gangakishore?). It is surprising that

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1. Calcutta Review, Sept. 1926, pp.433-4.
2. See Teignmouth, Memoirs of Sir William Jones, pp.73,431; S.K. De, Bengali Language and Literature, pp.79-81.
3. Calcutta Review, 1850, vol. 13, p.134.
4. S.K. De, op. cit., pp.82-5.
5. B.N. Banerji, Sambad-patre Sekalar Katha, I., p.iii.

though a pioneer in the field it came out every month with illustrations. The Bengal Gazette had a short life of less than a year. The next periodical, the Digdarsan, was started by the Serampore missionaries in March, 1818. It lived for two years and two months and the total number of copies printed was 10,675.[1] On May 31, 1818, the weekly Samachar Darpan came into existence, and quickly won the sympathy of the Marquis of Hastings. The Bengali style adopted in it was simple and concise. Indian as well as foreign news, articles on various topics and selections from other periodicals, both English and vernacular, were published. Though conducted by missionaries, it avoided religious controversy. A flood of correspondence reached its columns from the beginning, conveying the grievances and wants of the people.[2] J.C. Marshman was its editor, but the task of producing the journal was mainly in the hands of Hindu pundits, among whom the most notable were Jaygopal Tarkalankar and Tarini Charan Siromani. The last number of the Samachar Darpan came out on Dec. 25, 1841.[3]

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1. Bose and Moreno, A Hundred Years of the Bengali Press, pp.6-7. See also Cal. Rev. 1850, vol. 13, p.143.

2. He was the son of the eminent Baptist missionary, Joshua Marshman.

3. B.N. Banerji, op. cit., pp. IV-VI.

Ram Mohan Roy, the father of Bengali prose,[1] entered the field of journalism in 1819 as editor of the Sambad Kaumudi.[2] The first number of this journal demanded free primary education for the country. Female education was also advocated. But the most momentous question which the Kaumudi took up was that of the abolition of suttee. The journal survived up to 1840. Ram Mohun started another Bengali periodical, the Brahmanical Magazine, in 1821. Its career, to James Long, was "rapid, fiery, meteoric; and both from want of solid substance and through excess of inflammation it soon exploded and disappeared". It contained vehement attacks on the missionaries of the time.[3]

Religious controversy helped the growth of the Bengali press. In 1821 the Samachar Chandrika appeared on behalf of the orthodox Hindu community and took up the challenge of Ram Mohun and his followers.[4] The Timirnasak appeared in 1823, and was followed, two years later, by the Bangadut,[5] which was the

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1. R.C. Dutt, Literature of Bengal, p.139.

2. Bose, Morino, op. cit., p.13. According to B.N. Banerji it came out first in Dec. 1821.

3. Bose and Moreno, op. cit., pp.14-16; see also Calcutta Review 1850, vol. 13, p.147.

4. Calcutta Review, supra, p.157. According to B.N. Banerji it was started in March 1822.

5. According to B.N. Banerji it first appeared on May 10,1829.

first journal to be conducted in two languages at the same time, Bengali and Persian.

The year 1830 was a landmark in the history of Bengali journalism, since it saw the birth of the Sambad Provakar. The work of developing the Bengali language for literary purposes was successfully carried out by its talented editor, Isvar Chandra Gupta. Neither the editors of the Serampore journal nor Ram Mohan had evolved a style that could express ideas with felicity and grip the reader's interest. Isvar Chandra Gupta was the first Bengali writer to do so.[1] The Provakar became a daily paper in 1839. Incidentally, there was at this time a newspaper called Sambad Mrityunjay, in which every bit of writing including advertisements appeared in verse.

Meanwhile, the students of the Hindu College had been doing their destructive work. Their journalistic ventures appeared at first in English. The Parthenon, founded by Derozio, has already been noticed. A number of other journals followed, for instance the Inquirer, representing Young Bengal, and the Reformer, advocating the views of Ram Mohan's party.[2] But Bengali was also used for the dissemination of similar ideas

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1. See R.C. Dutt, op. cit., pp.152 et. seq.

2. Calcutta Review, 1852, vol. 17, p.361.

In June 1831 the Gyananyeshan was started with the financial help of Dakshinaranjan Mukherji. For thirteen years it was distributed free of charge to the educated men of Bengal. From the second year of its inception the journal began to appear both in English and Bengali. It is hardly necessary to mention that the Gyananyeshan attacked Hinduism and preached social and religious reform.[1]

The Bengal Spectator was probably the first Bengali journal to show interest in politics. It was started in 1842 by Ram Gopal Ghose and represented the views and aspirations of the British India Society, a sketch of which is given in the next chapter. This paper also was conducted both in English and Bengali. Starting as a monthly publication it became a fortnightly after three months, and then a weekly.[2]

Two years earlier, a journal of an entirely different nature had appeared. This was the semi-official Bengal Government Gazette, a weekly edited from Serampore by J.C. Marshman. The rulers of India had already realised what a great source of influence the press might be in their hands.[3]

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1. Bose and Moreno, op. cit., p.25.
2. Ibid, pp.46-49.
3. Ibid, pp.41-42.

In 1850 there were sixteen periodicals published in Calcutta, of which three came out every day, one three times a week and two twice a week, seven were weeklies, two bi-monthlies and one was a monthly. They had, in all, nearly 20,000 subscribers. The monthly Tatwa Badhini Patrika, which was an organ of the Brahmo Samaj and had been founded in 1843 by Devendra Nath Tagore, was the leading paper of the time. James Long wrote that for the excellence of its language and literary talent displayed, the Tatwabadhini did no little credit to its conductors who were employing the powerful agency of the Bengali language to convey European ideas.[1] The editor of this journal was Akshoy Kumar Dutt. "People all over Bengal wrote Romash Chandra Dutt, "awaited every issue of that paper with eagerness, and the silent and sickly but indefatigable worker at his desk swayed for a number of years the thoughts and opinions of the thinking portion of the people of Bengal".[2]

The Prevakar, sparkling with wit and conducted with much skill, was the favourite paper of orthodox Hindus. The Tatwabodhini, with its dignified tone, balance and high

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1. Calcutta Review, 1850, vol. 13, p.161.

2. R.C. Dutt, op. cit., pp.163-5.

sense of style, captured the heart of all who stood for social progress: creating a thirst for knowledge, re-assessing old values, it remained in the van of advanced thought for more than a decade. Akshoy Kumar's great co-worker in the field of Bengali prose was Isvar Chandra Vidyasagar. Their ways of self-expression were dissimilar. In Akshoy Kumar's style one admires the vehemence and force, as it were, of a mountain torrent; Vidyasagar's style, on the other hand, highly finished and refined, has the placid beauty of a lake. It was these two writers who gave Bengali prose its modern form.[1]

An account of many other Bengali journals which sprang up after 1850 is given in Bose and Moreno's useful work, A Hundred Years of the Bengali Press. One of them, however, should be mentioned here, the weekly Som Prakash, started in that year of horror and uncertainty, 1858. Vidyasagar himself was its founder, but he left the task of editing the paper to his friend, Dwarkanath Vidyabhuaan, who had been a professor in the Sanskrit College and possessed a good knowledge of English also. Up to this time Bengali periodicals had discussed mainly social and religious questions, political subjects having been ignored, or kept in the background. The Som Prakash was the first Bengali journal to discuss current political problems boldly and with insight. Under Vidyabhusen's guidance it

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1. Ibid, pp.168-9.

became a powerful organ, attracting numerous readers, to whom it spoke of the necessity of self-confidence and the inevitable triumph of the spirit of liberty; and as the years rolled on it began to preach to the youth of Bengal the political ideals of Mazzini and Garibaldi.[1]

By the end of the sixties Bengali had grown from a heterogeneous dialect into a pure and copious language, capable of expressing fine shades of thought and emotion. The first quarter of the nineteenth century saw poor beginnings, when experiments began to try what use could be made of the neglected ore; the second was an era of transition and ferment; at its end, the problem of Western education having been decisively settled, there emerged a period which was to witness a series of brilliant literary achievements.[2] Dead words were abandoned, The syntax was improved and grammar simplified. Strong, steady, well-packed sentences began to appear in place of long rambling ones. The intellectual energy of the people of Bengal flowed far more readily into the stream of literature than into any other. The struggle for political reform which was soon to start derived much of its vigour from the advent of writers who

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1. S.C. Mitra, Life of Vidyasagar, pp.373-4; see also Calcutta Review, Sept. 1926, p.435.

2. S.K. De, op. cit., pp.4-5.

could wield words as if they were swords.

Bengali journalism had come into being before the Indian-owned English press. Ram Mohan Roy and the students of the Hindu College together with their sympathisers were the first, among Indians, to issue periodicals in English. The Reformer, the Inquirer, and the Bengal Spectator have already been mentioned. The Hindu Intelligencer, edited by Kashi Prosad Ghose, who had been a student of the Hindu College, and the Bengal Recorder, both of which were short-lived, deserve mention. But the first great English journal, owned and edited by Indians was the Hindoo Patriot.

The history of the Hindoo Patriot, from its inception in 1853 to the climax of its influence in the middle of the sixties, is the history of the successive stages through which political ideas in Bengal passed and developed. At the end of that period, though the Patriot still remained the chief newspaper of the Bengalis, its power had declined. It could no longer keep pace with the onrush of advanced thought. Leadership then slipped from its hands into those of newer and less moderate journals.

The first great Bengali who entered the field of English journalism was Grish Chunder Ghose. Born in 1829, Grish was educated in the Oriental Seminary, the rival of the Hindu

College.[1] At the end ofhis school career he obtained a clerkship in the Finance Department of the Government of India on Rs. 15 a month, but was soon transferred on a higher pay to the office of the Military Auditor General. Curiously enough, another Hindu, whose name shines in the history of Bengal, had come to join the same office only eighteen months before: this was Harish Chandra Mukherji, who was older than Grish by five years, and was thus destined to stand out soon as the greatest journalist of the time. Grish, however, rose to higher official distinction as Registrar in the office of the Examiner, Pay Department, which had been formed on the abolition of the post of Military Auditor General.

Grish Chunder Ghose had been a contributor to the manuscript magazine issued by his school.[2] After leaving school he began to contribute to the Hindu Intelligencer, a weekly newspaper established in 1846 by Kashi Prasad Ghose, who was probably the first Indian to attain distinction as a writer of verses in English. But Grish made his real start in journalism as the Joint Editor of the Bengal Recorder, which was founded by his brother, about the year 1850. The new

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1. M.N. Ghose, Life of Grish Chandra Ghose, pp.11,20.
2. Ibid, pp.65,67,73,77.

weekly was favourably reviewed by J.C. Marshman, in the Serampore journal, the Friend of India. But owing to financial difficulties the paper had to be discontinued. At this time one Madhu Sudan Roy, who owned a printing press, came to its assistance. It was decided, however, that the name of the Bengal Recorder should be dropped and with its subscribers for a nucleus a new paper should be started. So, on January 6,185[illegible] the Hindoo Patriot came into existence. Grish Chunder Ghose was the first editor. It was not long before Hurish Chunder Mukherji joined its editorial staff. The Patriot did not pay its own way. So the first proprietor, after sustaining some loss, at the end of three years offered it for sale. Hurish Mukherji was the only one to make a bid for it. In June 1855 he became the owner of a journal which had proved a financial failure and seemed unlikely to be otherwise in newer hands.[1] It was a risky enterprise for a clerk who drew only a hundred rupees a month from his office and had no private recources. Besides, in those days of the pre-University period of English education, the Indian journalist's work was uphill. The European community took no interest in Indian journals, and, even when ably conducted, they were little appreciated by the public. There were only a few could read English; and those

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1. Hindoo Patriot, June 19, 1861.

who cared to pay for them were fewer still. Rich Hindus were apt to think that a paper edited by their own countrymen could not be good for much.[1] So the Hindoo Patriot started its career with scarcely a hundred subscribers and ahead of it lay days of stress and storm.

Grish Chunder did not sever his connection with the Hindoo Patriot until 1858.[2] In January of that year a periodical called the Calcutta Monthly Review was started with Grish as one of its principal contributors. In its first number he wrote an article supporting tenancy rights of Indian peasants. He also wrote articles denouncing the race antagonism which was so bitterly prevalent at the time; this brought upon him the fury of English journalists, one of whom proposed that he should be given a sound thrashing.[3]

Immediately after the death of Hurish Chunder Mukherji on June 14, 1861, Grish returned to the Hindoo Patriot[4] and edite

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1. R.G. Sanyal, Life of Kristo Das Pal, p.3.

2. M.N. Ghose, op. cit.; according to Sanyal he left the paper only three or four months after it was started.

3. See, e.g., his article, "The Mutiny and the educated natives", Calcutta Monthly Review, May, 1858.

4. Hindoo Patriot, June 26, 1861.

it for nearly five months. In the middle of November the paper passed into the hands of Kristo Das Pal.

During the same year Grish had been connected with a short-lived literary monthly which was known as Mookerjea's Magazine, having been started by Sambhu Chunder Mukherji, who became later, a distinguished journalist. In the following year Grish made plans to issue a weekly paper under the title of the Bengalee specially designed to voice the grievances of the ryots. The cultivation of indigo, a source of terrible oppression, was still the burning question of the day. The project of starting a weekly which would advance the interests of the ryots was as bold as it was noble. The desire of Grish Chunder was, as James Long said, "to elevate the ryot without levelling the Zemindar".[1] The prospectus of the new weekly stated that with unflinching honesty it would defend justice, and faithfully and fearlessly represent the ryot to the ruler and the ruler to the ryot.[2] A fortnight later, on May 6, the Bengalee made its appearance. It was not long before its views began to clash with those of the Hindoo Patriot, which had recently become the organ of the landed aristocracy.

It is interesting to note that W.C. Bonnerjee, the first President of the Indian National Congress, was employed

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1. M.N. Ghose, op. cit., p.161.

2. Hindoo Patriot, April 21, 1862.

on the Bengalee on a salary of Rs.20 a month, during the first two or three years of its existence.[1] The Bengalee made a steady headway until the death of its founder at the early age of forty on Sept. 20, 1869.[2] After this Becha Ram Chatterji, who was on the staff, carried on the paper for a few months, but only with much difficulty. At last in 1878 he sold it for Rs.10 to Surendranath Banerjea.[3]

Kristo Das Pal has paid a tribute to Grish Chunder's "power of word-painting, of clothing the commonest ideas in gorgeous and glittering costume, radiant with flashes of wit and humour". Grish, however, was famous not only as a writer, but also as a speaker in English. Many English speakers might well covet the brilliant fluency, wrote G.B. Malleson, the historian, with which he expressed his ideas.[4]

Meanwhile, the Hindoo Patriot was struggling into the forefront of journalism. Its new editor, Hurish Chunder Mukherji, had been born in April 1824, and after going to school for six years, had been compelled to leave at the age of fourteen in search of employment. Starting with a job on Rs.10 a month,

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1. M.N. Ghose, op. cit., pp.110.
2. Ibid, p.147.
3. S.N. Banerjea, A Nation In Making, pp.68-69.
4. M.N. Ghose, op. cit., pp.88,4.

he had made his way through numerous sufferings until in 1848 he had obtained by open competition a clerkship in the Military Auditor General's office. In this office he worked until his death, rising to the post of Assistant Military Auditor. After leaving school he carried on his own education. The Calcutta Public Library had in him, a zealous subscriber. He hadbegun to practise writing in the columns of the Hindu Intelligencer, the Englishman, then edited by Cob Hurry, who was notable for his sympathy towards Indians, and the Bengal Recorder. By strict economy he had saved a little money and with this he bought up the Hindoo Patriot.[1]

Hurish at first lost on the paper nearly Rs.100 a month. But the loss was reduced steadily until in 1858 it turned into a profit. In 1858 when the question ofthe re-marriage of widows was keenly debated, Hurish gave his support to the cause of reform. He severely attacked Lord Dalhousie's policy of annexation. But the outbreak of the Mutiny brought about a change in the tone of the Hindoo Patriot. Hitherto Hurish had maintained the attitude of an independent oppositionist, and frequently condemned the views and actions of the Government.[2] But by the middle of the year 1857, the

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1. R.G. Sanyal, Bengal Celebrities, pp.64 et. seq.

2. ~~P. Banerjee, Lights and Shades, pp.32-38.~~

pressure of historical events had turned him into a supporter of British rule.[1] Lord Canning, when bitterly assailed by the Anglo-Indian press, headed by the Friend of India, found support in the Hindoo Patriot.[2] The educated public began to realize the value of a paper which had attracted the attention of the Government; and it was during this memorable period that Kristo Das Pal and Shambhu Chunder Mukherji began to write for it. The editor of the Hindoo Patriot, with his usual keenness of observation, was quick to discern their talents.

There was, finally, the indigo crisis which enhanced the reputation of the journal, for it became the champion of the distressed ryots. But Hurish was broken down in health. Death came suddenly, on June 14, 1861. An obituary described it as a "thunder-stroke". "Firm though respectful", it added, "generous at all times, sometimes a partizan though scarcely ever insincere . . . . . bold and original without ostentation, the leader of the Hindoo Patriot weaned his countrymen from mere enervating poetry to politics . . . . and exacted for them respect from Europeans".[3]

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1. F. Bonerjee, Lights and Shades, pp.32-38.

2. Lethbridge, op. cit., p.128.

3. Hindoo Patriot, June 19, 1861. For a detailed study of Hurish's life and work see Framjee Bonamjee, Lights and Shades.

After the death of Hurish, Grish Chunder Ghose and Sambhu Chunder Mukherjee took charge of the paper. The sensational trial of James Long led to its temporary enlargement. Then its new proprietor, Kali Prasanna Sinha, made it over to Isvar Chandra Vidyasagar, who appointed three men to act as joint editors. Two of these soon withdrew from the paper, leaving it solely in the hands of Kristo Das Pal. He conducted the Hindoo Patriot for nearly a year; then its control passed from the hands of Vidyasagar to those of a body of trustees who were prominent members of the British Indian Association.[1] Thus it was transformed into the organ of the landed aristocracy. Kristo Das seemed to have been paid a fixed salary at first, but when, by his able management, he secured the confidence ofthe trustees, the net profits of the journal were made over to him for life. About 1862 the income of the Hindoo Patriot was very low. It had not more than 250 subscribers. For financial reasons the extra news sheet which had been added to it in the previous year was abandoned. In 1863, however, the paper became so successful that it was found possible to enlarge it again. The subsequent history of the Hindoo Patriot was one of rapid march to influence and

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1. R.G. Sanyal, Life of Kristo Dal Pal, pp.14,29-30. See also Y.S.C. Mitra, Life of Vidyasagar, p.370.

prosperity. This was due to the journalistic talents of Kristo Das Pal who continued to edit it until his death in 1884. A sketch of Kristo Das Pal's life and work is given in the next chapter in connection with the growth of the political association of which he was a prominent member.

It may seem strange that the two great Bengali journalists who boldly criticised the action of the Government whenever need arose were both Government servants. Kristo Das Pal, who was in a more independent position, being in the employ of the British Indian Association, hardly ever attacked the Government so strongly as Grish Chunder Ghose and Hurish Mukherji had done. Grish was an uncompromising advocate of the right of officials freely to criticize Government measures. By accepting public service, he wrote, they did not forfeit the right of citizens to express their views on measures to which they might take objection.[1]

Finally, it should be noted that the Mutiny, which was a turning-point in the political history of India, made small mark on the history of Indian journalism. The growth

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1. Hindoo Patriot, May 11, 1854, ap. M.N. Ghose, op. cit., pp.75-76.

of newspapers was hardly affected by it. If, on the one hand, the general fear and uncertainty threatened to arrest that growth, the thirst for news in the people's mind must have encouraged circulation. Lord Canning's "Gagging Act" laid a heavy hand on the Anglo-Indian rather than the Indian press. The Indians who edited newspapers at the time of the Mutiny disliked despotism, but they shrank from the thought of uprooting it by force, Peace-loving by nature, they found an outlet for their discontent in scathing words and angry rhetoric, and became the pioneers of constitutional agitation in Bengal. The armed struggle against foreign power waged by the military castes of the upper provinces drove them into the camp of the foreigner. Liberty was still in their minds a subject for academic discussion, a Utopian ideal, rather than a goal that could be reached by calculated plans and concerted action. Besides, was it not a wild dream that liberty might be achieved if the mutineers, untouched by the spirit of democracy, succeeded in drowning in blood the last vestiges of British rule?

C H A P T E R I I

EARLY POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS.

English education created in Bengal a great zeal for social reform. It also created a new political consciousness. The works of Shelley and Wordsworth, among others, inspired with the noblest ideas of the French Revolution could not but sink deeply into sensitive Oriental minds, accustomed to seek a criticism of life in poetry. But the prose of Gibbon, Hume and Paine produced probably an even deeper impression. History was not a subject which had found favour with Hindus during the centuries of their predominance in India. Even under the Muslims Hindu chroniclers did no more than imitate Muslim models. But the new generation eagerly turned to history, spurred with curiosity to know more about the English. The study of history revealed how in England despotism had been replaced by the rule of the aristocracy: how Parliament had grown. The lesson was not lost on the Bengali land-owning class; and the struggle of the English bourgeoisie in 1832 for a share in their country's Government was not lost on the Bengali merchant and lawyer.

It is significant that Raja Ram Mohan Roy, a rich Zemindar, was the father of constitutional agitation in India.[1] It is also significant that his political successors were drawn from the ranks of Zemindars as well as merchants and professional men.

The diffusion of English education removed much of the inferiority complex which had seized the Bengalis, as it always seizes a dominated race. There arose a cry for equality with the foreigner. It was fear of this cry that roused a question in the minds of Englishmen: "Will not the progress of Western learning be a menace to our supreme control over India?" Those who asked it were mainly either Government officials or indigo-planters. The answers revealed much divergence of opinion. Some declared emphatically that the English were laying the axe to the tree which they themselves had planted: others said that Western learning would create a bond of sympathy and mutual understanding between the Indians and their rulers: still others, like Munro, saw the future clearly and were not afraid ~~at the vision~~ of

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1. Collett, Ram Mohan Roy, p.254.

Indian self-government.[1]

The question seemed to have drawn the attention of Sir Robert Anstruther, who had been Chief Justice of the Calcutta Supreme Court and a member of Parliament during the years 1809 - 11. He is said to have spoken with anxiety and fear of the grave political consequences to which the spread of English education might lead.[2] In 1832, Robert Cotton Money, a distinguished member of the Bombay Civil Service, and for several years the Secretary of the Native Education Society, submitted to the Governor of Bombay a Memoir on the education of the natives of India. The British Government, he remarked, was in a difficult position. So long as the country had remained immersed in ignorance, the Government had nothing to fear from public opinion, which in fact did not exist. With the spread of Western learning public opinion had begun to grow. Developing in fragments, it had remained powerless, lacking a medium through which it could express itself. But as education advanced and newspapers multiplied

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1. When the Indians, wrote Munro, "become sufficiently enlightened to frame a regular Government for themselves, and to conduct and preserve it, ... it will probably be best for both countries that the British control over India should be gradually withdrawn". Arbuthnot, Sir Thomas Munro, II, p.327.

2. S.N. Banerji, Speeches (1876-80), p.35. I cannot trace Anstruther's remarks in Hansard.

in number, public opinion was bound to acquire greater strength. The Government was already in 1832 a target for attack. Liberty and equality was the cry of the young radicals.[1]

In the following year, a writer in the Calcutta Monthly Journal stated the opposite view. The new education, he declared, would most effectively bind Indians to British rule, "by enabling them rightly to appreciate the motives of their rulers and the tendency of public measures, and by producing in various forms a greater sympathy between the Native and the British-born subjects of the Crown".[2]

Alexander Duff said in an address delivered on May 25,1835, that to have given the Indians knowledge without religion was a political blunder. Shaken out of the mechanical routine of their own religious observances, they were turning into "discontented, restless agitators - ambitious of power and official distinction, and possessed of the most

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1. R.C. Money, Memoir, pp.16,22.

2. Calcutta Monthly Journal, Sept. 1833, p.524.

disloyal sentiments towards the Government, which, in their eye, usurped all the authority that rightfully belonged to themselves." But as soon as some of these became Christians, their feelings towards the Government entirely changed. They prayed for the permanence of British rule, so that under the shadow of its protection they might disseminate the teachings of Christianity. There were no subjects of the British Crown more loyal than the students of the General Assembly's Institution.[1]

C.B. Leupolt, a missionary who came to India first in 1841, published in 1846 a volume of Recollections which contain some remarks of considerable interest. He said that the Hindus had no unity, nor a sense of patriotism. They were walled up by caste divisions and sub-divisions. They were content to bear the yoke which they wore, saying that the wooden yoke of the English was lighter than the iron one of the Mahomedans. England, therefore, had nothing to fear from the Hindus by way of revolution. In their existing state they would not, and could not, rise against the Government. But it was not so with the Mahomedans. "They would gladly extirpate the English twenty times over . . . . if they had

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1. Duff, Missionary Addresses, pp.40-2. On April 9,1813, a petition was presented to the House of Commons stating that the "Empire of Great Britain in the East would . . derive additional strength and stability from the spread of the Christian religion". See Hansard, 1813, vol.25,7

but the power. They sometimes tell the Missionaries plainly, "If you were not our rulers, we would soon silence your preaching, not with argument, but with the sword". Leupolt further remarked that the Government was nourishing vipers and might one day be bitten. It was filling the minds of young Indians with knowledge of every kind, but leaving their hearts untouched: these Indians despised the "English conquerors, foreign rulers, proud tyrants". But in the Mission Schools which also gave Western education and taught history, a different result was obtained, for the hearts of the students were not left untouched. There, along with religious instruction, such "commandments" were given as 'Honour the King', 'Obey authorities'. No student of the Mission Schools was likely to use such language with regard to the English as Leupolt himself had heard from students of Government seminaries, as, for example, the following remark: "God has given you India; beware how you use your power, for He can take it from you".[1]

In 1857, in an introductory notice to R.C. Money's "Memoir on the education of the natives of India", Rev. C.F.S Money quoted the opinion of a European teacher with regard to the prevailing educational system. The teacher had said that the system of education had been imperilling the tranquility of India and the safety of the British Empire.

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1. Leupolt, Recollections of an Indian Missionary, pp.38-40.

He had said: "The Government, in fact, does not know what it is doing. No doubt it is breaking down the superstition and dispersing those mists which, by creating weakness and disunion, facilitated the conquest of the country; but instead of substituting any useful truth, or salutary principles, for the ignorance and false principles which they remove, they are only facilitating the dissemination of the most pernicious errors, and the most demoralizing and revolutionary principles. I have been appaled by discovering the extent to which atheistical and deistical writings, together with disaffection to the British Government have spread, and are spreading, among those who have been educated in Government schools, or are now in the service of Government . . . . . The whole subject of Government education requires to be reconsidered". Rev. C.F.S. Money added his own comment that the new anti-British tendency could be counteracted by inculcating Christianity in Government schools along with secular instruction.[1]

In the following year the Church Missionary Society issued a pamphlet criticising the educational policy of the Government, and lending its support to the words of Robert Cotton Money penned in 1832.[2]

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1. C.F.S. Money, Introductory Notice ap. R.C. Money, Memoir, pp. 5 et. seq.

2. Indian Crisis.

Entirely divergent, however, was the opinion of John Freeman, a leading indigo-planter. Writing in 1858 he said that the study of English language and history would make Indians respectful towards their foreign ruler, for they would then be aware of the Englishman's power and energy, his indomitable perseverance and vast resources. The gradual spread of the Anglo-Saxon tongue amongst the population of India, he said, would be as the key-stone to a hold over that country which the English had never yet possessed.[1]

Leupolt returned to the subject in 1864 when, as a result of a second visit to India, he wrote his "Further Recollections". Answering the question, which had been frequently put to him in England, whether he expected another Mutiny, he said that for the present he did not. Still, he would not be surprised, he added, if, after some time, another outbreak took place. That outbreak, if it came at all, was not likely to be confined to the army alone. From beyond the Indian frontiers the British had little or nothing to fear. The danger lay within the country, and was partly the creation of those whom it threatened. The danger lay not with the old

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1. Freeman, A Reply to the Memorandum of the East India Company, p.50.

Thakurs and great Zemindars, nor with the merchants and bankers, for these would only be losers in a revolution. Education without the Bible was the cry at home and in India, and that education was bound in time to produce its bitter fruit. Having a free press the Indian newspapers made use of language that was anything but loyal. "It is true", Lenpolt wrote, "that Bengali Babus will not do us much harm with the sword, but they may, and will do, much by their pens and tongues". In Government Colleges Indians were taught chemistry. They were eager to learn it. During the Mutiny the English had thought that there would soon be an end to the sepoys' ability to fight, as they would soon have no caps for their rifles, but some young men who had learnt chemistry in Government Colleges made caps and supplied the sepoys with them.[1]

The controversy regarding the political effect of the spread of Western learning in India reached the ears of Macaulay himself. In one of his last speeches in the House of Commons he said that the British should not secure or prolong their dominion in India by attempting to exclude the

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1. Lenpolt, Further Recollections, pp.371-4.

natives of that country from a share in its government, or by attempting to discourage their study of Western learning. "I will never consent", he said, "to keep them ignorant in order to keep them managable, or to govern them in ignorance in order that we may govern them long".[1] It seems, however, that while Macaulay was speaking these words, he was confident at heart that the new educational policy which he had inaugurated would not become a menace to the safety of the Empire; for, continuing the same speech he declared that he was unable to understand how education would give the Hindus such an accession of intellect that an established government backed by the whole army and navy of England would go down inevitably before its irresistible power.[2]

The confidence of Macaulay, however, was ill justified. His policy prepared the soil from which anti-British ideas were soon to grow. Chunder Nath Bose said in a meeting of the Bethune Society: "That must be a very questionable political system which cannot co-exist with a system of sound liberal education, which can only thrive and prosper at the

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1. Hansard, 1853, vol. 128,759.
2. Ibid, 758.

expense of a nation's intellectual culture, and whose vitality has to be purchased with the moral and intellectual death of two hundred millions of human beings."[1] But it is difficult to see how educated Indians might remain content in a state of subservience. It was inevitable that Western learning would increasingly bring to light the contradictions inherent in British despotic rule. The Committee of Public Instruction started to give Indians command over an artillery which was one day bound to be turned upon British Imperialism itself. The new political ideas conveyed to Indians did not constitute by themselves a menace. But political ideas nearly always tend to find a receptacle in the form of a party: and an organized party, gathering strength, may threaten the foundations of the existing state. This has been the historic process in India as elswehere. The period covered by this thesis did not see the building of any powerful party machinery, but it was a formative period in which ideas began to crystallize. It was the background of the political struggle which began after two decades. Nationalism and democracy were the two root ideas over which half of Europe fought and fumed in the nineteenth century. These were also

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1. C.N. Bose, High Education in India, p.13.

to be the root ideas of Indian political life. Besides, the scientific knowledge which India's conquerors spread was not to be lost on the conquered race. The Indians learnt the mysteries of the printing machine and used it for the purpose of agitation. They pressed the railway and the telegraph to their service. They learnt chemistry and made bombs .

The spread of doctrines through debating societies was the first step towards the awakening of interest in politics. The work done by the institutions connected with the Hindu College as well as that done by the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge has already been mentioned. A number of literary societies also sprang up, some of which began to discuss political questions. Isvar Chandra Gupta, the well-known editor of the Sambad Provakar, founded a society called Banga Bhasa Prokasika. Among other questions, this society debated at some length a burning topic of the day - the Government's investigation of titles to rent-free lands, which was attacked as a proposal to levy rent on such lands. Isvar Chandra Gupta founded another society called Des Hitaisini Sabha. Most of the notable men of Calcutta and the editors of the Bengali journals became its members. It broke down within a short period of time owing apparently to the sudden illness of its founder.[1]

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1. Sambad Provakar, Jan.31 and Feb.1, 1866.

The Landholders' Association was founded in April, 1838, by Dwarkanath Tagore who had realized that the zemindars could, by working through a society instead of remaining isolated units, increase their power and prestige, and influence the decisions of the Government.[1] Prosonno Kumar Tagore and W.C. Hurry, the editor of the Englishman, were its joint secretaries, but Dwarkanath continued to guide its activities as long as he lived. On its formation the society requested the permission of the Government to address it as the Chamber of Commerce did. In reply the Government intimated that it would always "be disposed to receive and conside the representations of any class of the inhabitants, affecting their own interests or the good of the community". Several questions of considerable importance to the Zemindars were taken up by the society. It agitated, for example, against the resumption of rent-free tenures, and convened a meeting at the Town Hall for the purpose of petitioning the Home authorities against the measure, and also for co-operating with the British India Society of London formed under the chairmanship of Lord Brougham. The meeting attracted Europeans as well as a large number of Indians. The society grew into an influential political body. The Friend of India and the Calcutta Courier condemned the Government for recognising it as the medium of

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1. Ibid, March 2, 1858, and Gyananyeshan, November 18,1837 ap. B.N. Banerji, Sambadpatre Sekaler Kathar vol. II, pp. 291-2.

communication between the State and the landed interest. The purely class character of the Landholders' Association hardly needs to be emphasized. It was, however, a pioneer in the field of organized, constitutional agitation.[1]

A year after the forming of this Association, a meeting took place in London on July 6, 1839, for the establishment of the British India Society. Lord Brougham was in the chair. The meeting drew its inspiration from George Thompson. Born in 1804, Thompson had become widely known as an advocate of the abolition of slavery in the British colonies. In October, 1833, a series of lectures delivered by him had resulted in the formation of the "Edinburgh Society for the abolition of slavery throughout the world". In September, 1834, he had visited the United States. Working with the members of the American Anti-slavery Society, he had helped to build up more than three hundred branch associations. His life had been frequently threatened. At the end of 1835 he had been forced to escape from Boston in an English vessel bound for New Brunswick, sailing from there for England. On his return home he had been enthusiastically received. He had become associated with Joseph Hume and with the Anti-Corn Law League

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1. K.C. Mitra, Memoir of D.N. Tagore, pp.29-34, 123.

and the National Parliamentary Reform Association.[1]

Such a man's interest in India, first aroused by the news of a terrible famine in the upper provinces, was bound to be fruitful. In the meeting convened on July 6, 1839, he stated that his countrymen had behaved in India as mercenary conquerors, that they had abused their power and blindly pursued a ruinous policy, being intent only on gain. India, he said, was the most unpopular subject of discussion in the House of Commons.[2]

Resolutions were passed at the meeting. The first declared that the existing condition of a hundred million Indians, who were totally excluded from the right of representation and were dominated by a Government over which they had no control, demanded the active sympathy and constant vigilance of the British people. Another Resolution was passed, sanctioning the formation of the British India Society, which would try to keep Englishmen informed on Indian affairs, and also to give effect to such measures as were likely to be beneficial to that country.[3]

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1. Dictionary of National Biography, vol. 5,6, p.211.
2. Speeches delivered at a public meeting for the formation of a British India Society, pp.52,53.
3. Ibid, pp.21,67.

The Society published and circulated a large number of pamphlets and formed associations modelled on itself in various parts of Britain. Later, it started a monthly paper called the British Indian Advocate. In 1841 George Thompson joined the Anti-Corn Law League on its special assurance that at the successful termination of its struggle it would co-operate with him in the cause of India.[1] The work taken up by the Society was difficult: it had no strong links with the country it wanted to serve; there was no Indian body from which it could gather information. Its opponents accused it of want of first-hand knowledge of the people for whom it spoke.[2]

"The radicalism of those days", as Professor Dodwell remarks, "was essentially individualist; and the chief reform which the society demanded was the transformation of the revenue system, which, it was said, made the Government the universal landlord".[3] The best work of George Thompson, however, was done not in the various meetings which he organized in English towns, but in gatherings of Calcutta intellectuals. Arriving in India with Dwarkanath Tagore at the end of the year 1842,

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1. G. Thompson, Speeches, pp.ii,iii.
2. G. Thompson, Addresses, p.27.
3. Cumming, Political India, p.33.

he is said to have "electrified Calcutta" with his eloquence.[1] Lord Brougham had once remarked that he had never listened to any orator with a voice as persuasive as Thompson's.[2] It was inevitable that the minds of educated Bengali youths would fill with enthusiasm when addressed by such an able speaker. New techniques of expression were in demand. One medium through which ideas could be broadcast, that of the written word, was being carefully explored; and the result was the development of the Bengali language and the growth of periodicals. There was also an attempt on the part of some journalists to acquire a simple English style. The other medium through which ideas could be disseminated was that of the spoken word. In Bengal the spoken word was in a way a sharper instrument ofpropaganda than the other. For the average Bengali, emotional by temperament, is deeply affected by the personality of the orator: when pages of print have failed, a propagandist can yet win his battle with a moving simile and a swift gesture.

With the advance of the century, public meetings had begun to be more and more a regular feature of Calcutta's social life. Before, the people of Calcutta used to meet in places of entertainment, such as "Wright's New Tavern", "Moore's Assembly Rooms", and "Harmonic Tavern".[3] On February 21,1804,

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1. K.C. Mitra, op. cit., p.105.

2. Holyoake, Sixty years of an agitator's life, I,p.98.

3. See Rainey, A Historical and Topographical Sketch of Calcutta.

the inhabitants of Calcutta formally decided in a public meeting to erect a Town Hall. A great lottery was arranged and a part of the proceeds applied to the cost of the building, which was completed in 1813 at an expenditure of seven lacs of rupees.[1] This Town Hall has seen the slow, uncertain evolution, followed, later, by rapid flights of growth of Indian politics.

It was here that George Thompson delivered some of his later speeches. The earlier ones were delivered at the meetings of the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge and also in the houses of educated Indians. At one of these meetings, convened on April 20,1843, it was decided to form the Bengal British India Society. The Society was to collect and disseminate information regarding Indian affairs, and to work for securing the welfare and extending the rights of the natives. Ram Gopal Ghose moved a resolution stating specifically that such measures alone should be adopted as were fully consistent with loyalty to the Crown. He desired nothing more sincerely, he said, than "the perpetuity of the British sway". While being a supporter of wholesome reform, he was also a firm supporter of British rule, and should bitterly deplore any event which weakened the ties that bound India to Britain.[2]

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1. Cotton, Calcutta, old and new, pp.728-9.
2. Thompson, Addresses, pp.138-9.

It should be noted that the formation of such a society was not contrary to the wishes of the Government. "All the members of the Government with whom I have had the privilege of conversing", said George Thompson in one of his earlier speeches, "have deeply lamented the want of the means, on the part of the people, of conveying their sentiments upon Government measures".[1]

The meeting further decided that a committee of four would be entrusted with the task of preparing an Address to the public based upon the resolutions passed. The Committee would also prepare a list of office-bearers, and frame rules of procedure, which were to be submitted for approval to a general meeting of the members.[2]

Of the Address I have not been able to find a copy. George Thompson's speeches do not contain any striking political idea. "Our policy in this country has not only been selfish, but blind",he declared,[3] and spoke vaguely of the rights of Indians. Week after week, new bills were being introduced,he said to his audience,"but you offer no advice,you threaten no

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1. Ibid, p.28.
2. Ibid, pp.141-2.
3. Thompson, Speeches, p.85.

opposition, you recommend no modification".[1] He advised his audience to love India and to work for improving its system of government. "Combine, speak with one voice", was the essence of his message. But, besides considering the drafts of proposed bills, what else was the combined body to do? What was to be its policy, its demand, its line of action? Thompson never answered these questions. His speeches were almost always a welter of words. He never proposed any far-reaching structural changes in the administration. His success lay in rousing enthusiasm and directing it into political channels. He did little else.

The Bengal British India Society never became a powerful body. Soon after its birth it began to languish. The Landholders' Association, which had been established at an earlier date, was also in a moribund condition. The ensuing renewal of the Charter Act revived interest in politics, and it was decided to fuse the two existing political bodies into one. Thus, on October 29, 1851, a new society was formed under the name of the British Indian Association.

A pamphlet called "Rules of the Britisn Indian Associ ation", published in 1852, states its aims and objects

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1. Ibid, p.41.

and how it was constituted. Its principal ain was to promote the efficiency of the British Indian Government "and thereby to advance the common interests of Great Britain and India, and ameliorate the condition of the native inhabitants of the subject country". Its duty was to send petitions from time to time to the authorities in India and in England for the removal and prevention of injurious measures and for the introduction of laws designed to promote the general interests of all connected with the subject country.

The Association was to consist of honorary, Ordinary and Corresponding Members. The number of honorary members was not to be more than ten. These were to be persons of distinction and ability whose connection with the society was desirable. The number of Ordinary and Corresponding members should be unlimited Any Indian who sympathised with the objects of the Association and was prepared to contribute to its find the sum of Rs. 50 annually could become an ordinary member. The other membership would be formed of men living outside Calcutta. Candidates for admission as members must be proposed by one and seconded by another member, and then elected by a majority vote in a General Meeting. There should be a President, a Vice-President, a Secretary and an Assistant Secretary, as well as a Committee of Management of not less than nine members. The Committee should conduct all the

ordinary business of the Association. It should publish periodicals and pamphlets to promote the objects it worked for, diffusing information and exciting interest in India and Britain.[1]

A meeting should be held in September, every year, to elect office-bearers, to hear the annual report and to transact any other business that might be brought forward. Besides, an ordinary general meeting should be held on the first Monday of every month. A special meeting might be called at any time on a request supported by at least three members. No meeting should be authorised to enter on any business unless at least five members were present. Voting should be usually by a show of hands, but a ballot should be taken whenever demanded by any member present.[2]

Clearly, the Association was organised on modern lines, and capable of becoming an efficient instrument of action. There was an executive committee entrusted with the leadership, and at the same time responsible to the general body. Provision was made for the calling of special general meetings. The principle of the quorum was recognised. There was to be no

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1. The main publication of the society was the weekly Hindoo Patriot.

2. Rules of the British Indian Assod ation, pp.3-8.

endless discussion, as was traditional in the Indian village system, in order that a unanimous decision could be reached: every point was to be settled by a majority. Voting might be taken, whenever demanded, by ballot.

Raja Radhakanta Deb was the first President of the British Indian Association, and Raja Kali Krishna the Vice-President. Devendranath Tagore was the Honorary Secretary, and Dagambar Mitra, who became later a High Court Judge, the Assistant Secretary. The Committee of Management included such well-known men as Romanath Tagore, Prosonno Kumar Tagore, Joykishen Mukherji, Ram Gopal Ghose, Peary Chand Mitra and Sambhu Nath Pandit. The first of these was an uncle of Devendranath and had worked enthusiastically for the Landholders' Association. The last was, like Digembar Mitra, destined to become a High Court Judge.[1]

From the personnel of the leaders of the society, as also from its membership, it is clear that, like its predecessor, it was a class organization of the landed aristocracy. The Zemindars of Bengal had now entered the political arena to defend their existing position. They were determined to maintain every prop of the permanent settlement.

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1. First Annual Report of B.I.A.; see also R.C. Sanyal, Life of Kristo Das Pal, p.105.

Besides they were eager to win some degree of political power. Unlike the intellectuals of Calcutta, who quoted Bentham and Paine, they had no desire for far-reaching changes, nor were they in any sense the apostles of democracy. When they talked of the rights of the people, they meant the rights of their own class. They were little concerned with the material progress of the masses of their countrymen. It is true that some of these Zemindars were zealous for charity and social reform. But that zeal never hindered them from pursuing at any cost their class interest. The first President of the British Indian Association had been the founder and leader of the reactionary Dharma Sabha which had fought Bentinck's measure for the abolition of sati. But that did not prevent Devendra Nath Tagore, the leader of the Brahmo Samaj and an eminent reformer, from joining the Association as its Honorary Secretary.

The new Zemindars' organization was, however, not a replica of the old. It was a far more efficient machine, and its leaders were bolder and more active. But the essential difference between the two was that the new one was based on an alliance between the landowners, the merchants and a certain section of the intellectuals. An alliance between landowners and merchants was easily accomplished, for they formed two sections of one class. And parts of the two sections overlapped: Dwarkanath, the senior partner in the well-known banking concern

of Carr and Tagore, was a great Zemindar: it was customary for prosperous merchants to invest capital in land, which brought them prestige in addition to its being a sound economic asset. But the intellectuals who joined the Association were not great land-owners. Usually, they sold their services to this powerful body for their own material benefit; ~~but~~ some of them, however, ~~certainly~~ had a nobler aim in view - that of working for the welfare of the people while furthering the interests of the small land-owning class. This seems to have been the object of the famous journalist, Kristo Das Pal.

Two months after the establishment of the Association, the Committee of Management appointed one G.J. Gordon as its London agent, in order to present to Parliament petitions which would be forwarded to him by the Committee. He was also to transact such other business as would advance the objects of the society. "You will observe", the Honorary Secretary wrote at the end of his letter of instructions, "that the Association is composed entirely of natives and is altogether free from European influence".[1]

In the same year, 1852, the Association extended its activities beyond the boundaries of Bengal. Devendra Nath

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1. Rules of the B.I.A., p.2.

addressed a letter on its behalf to the natives of Madras, asking them either to join the society as corresponding members or to establish a society of their own with similar aims. "The representations which are to be made to the British Parliament with reference to the approaching termination of the East India Company's Charter", he said, "would have great weight, if they were made simultaneously by the Natives of every part of British India or by a Society having just pretensions to represent them".[1] He added, in order to prove of the earnestness of the Association, that though newly founded and possessing as yet only a small membership, it had already collected Rs.16,500 for its fund.

A public meeting was held at Madras, with Appaswamy Pillai in the chair, to discuss the contents of Devendra Nath's letter. The chairman proposed that it was advisable for the Madrasis to form a branch society and thus combine their representations of grievances with those of their "brethren in Bengal". After some deliberation it was resolved that "a Society be formed under the designation of the Madras Branch of the British Indian Association at Calcutta".[2]

Subsequently a branch society was also formed in Oudh.

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1. Proceedings of the Madras Branch of the B.I.A., p.4.
2. Ibid, p.6.

Smaller branches came slowly into being in different parts of Bengal, and as a result of this the Association held a general meeting on January 27, 1861, and issued its revised rules. The existing rules remained unchanged, but certain new ones dealing with branch societies were added. Any society in the mufassil adopting the principles on which the Association was conducted and wanting to be connected with it, was to be recognised as a Branch Society. The Committee of Management was to correspond with it regularly and render it the necessary assistance. The Branch Societies were to pass rules and bye-laws relating to their internal affairs, but no change in the fundamental rules could be made without the sanction of the parent body. The Branch Societies must furnish the Association with copies of their proceedings.[1]

The land-owning interests of Bengal had thus established a strong union, thoroughly centralized, though encouraging the formation of branch societies. But there never was a time during the succeeding years when the British Indian Association could stand on an all-India basis. Its contact even with the Association in Madras was lost. The society with an all-India

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1. Rules of the B.I.A. as revised on the 27th Jan., 1861, p.8.

organization did not come into being until late in the seventies, and was not aristocratic, but middle-class. The journalists and lawyers succeeded where the Zemindars had failed. The reason was that the Zemindari system existed only in certain parts of India, while every province had its journalists and lawyers. Besides, the Zemindars were a stationary class, while the class of professional men was rapidly expanding. Above all, the progressive and dynamic middle class were far better equipped than the aristocracy to form a political union of the different provinces and create a new national life.

The constitutional ideas of the Association were first embodied in its Petition to Parliament presented in 1852, on the eve of the renewal of the Charter. The petitioners began by saying that they had not profited by their connection with the British as much as they should have done. In the previous Charter Act no provision had been made for introducing measures which were absolutely essential - such as the relaxation of revenue pressure by the lightening of the land tax where it was variable; erecting public works of utility; improving the judicial system by the selection of well-qualified men and the abolition of stamp duties on legal documents; employing a more numerous and disciplined police force; abolishing the "gigantic monopolies" which the East India Company maintained very inconsistently with its position as ruler[1] and encouraging the

1. Cf. Adam Smith, Wealth of Nations (edited by Cannan, 2nd ed.) 11, pp.245-6.

local industries and commerce; educating the people adequately, for which much more than a paltry grant of a lac of rupees was required; appointing to the higher offices men better qualified to hold them by virtue of their experience, ability and knowledge of Indian languages and customs, than those who had been hitherto sent out, "usually before they had emerged from the state of adolescence"; admitting Indians to a participation in the rights conceded by constitutional governments, so that they might be qualified to enjoy the benefit of free institutions at a future period.

The petitioners then stated that there should be a single body in England, charged with the management of Indian affairs. It should consist of twelve members, half of them being nominated by the Crown, and the rest periodically elected by a popular body. The six elected members of this Board of Management should represent not the Proprietors only, but also other parties having a deeper and more direct interest in the welfare of the country. An electorate should be made out of Indian and European British subjects who were the holders of the Company's promissory notes of 4 or 5 per cent to the value of Rs.25,000 or Rs.20,000 respectively.[1]

1. The Draft does not suggest the formation of this electorate but leaves the appointment of the six non-official members in the hands of the Proprietors.

Next, the petitioners criticized the constitution of the Government of India. The right of the Governor-General to act on his own responsibility, contrary to the advice of his Council, practically invested him with absolute power. Since he could go to any part of the country without his Council, the appointment of that body became superfluous.

The union of executive with legislative power was not an anomaly in itself, but was injurious to the interests of the people, which had so far been neglected while those of the Government had received great attention. The Legislature of India should be a body distinct from the Executive, and should possess a representative character so as to voice the sentiments of the people. It was regrettable that Indians had not the smallest share in the administration of the affairs of their country, but were dominated by a Government which availed itself of its special powers to make laws subserving its own financial purposes. Though drafts of proposed bills were published there was no popular body to consider their provisions. Besides the discussions of the legislature were carried on behind closed doors. Not only were laws enacted without reference to the people, but were enforced against their strongest remonstrances.

Their petitions were of no avail. This state of affairs was unjust and impolitic. It was therefore suggested that the legislature of British India be built on the Colonial model, and the making of laws be carried on with open doors. A Legislative Council should be formed at Calcutta, composed of seventeen members; of these, three should be selected from among the "most respectable and qualified native inhabitants" of each presidency; one to be appointed by each Governor from among the senior civil servants; one member to be appointed by the Crown in the same way as the fourth ordinary member of the Council was appointed, and should be a man of legal education. The members should be in office for five years, and during this period they should not hold any other Government office. To ensure this independent action they should not be removable by the Crown as under Section 74 of the Charter Act. They should receive a reasonable salary. Until the people were considered qualified to exercise the right of electing their own representatives in the Council, the Indian members might be nominated by the Governor-General; but certain rules should, at the same time, be framed, by which the people of any presidency would have the power of objecting on specified grounds to any appointment. The Law Commission should be abolished, as its purpose would be fulfilled by the Legislative Council.

The bills passed should be submitted to the Governor-General in Council, who should communicate his opinion on them within three months of the date of submission. On the lapse of that period his concurrence should be implied. When the Governor-General in Council rejected a bill, he should communicate the motive of his action to the Legislature, which should have the liberty to appeal to the Imperial Parliament. The Court of Directors should have no power of interfering with legislation.

A Declaratory Act should state that no laws should be passed interfering with the faith or religious institutions of the natives, "unless they be in consonance with the general feelings of the natives themselves".

The petitioners then declared that economy was required in the public services. The higher offices in India were too highly paid, and the lower ones too inadequately. The great distinctions should, to a certain extent, be ironed out. Reform was further required in the Civil Service, the holders of which regarded themselves as a privileged class and treated the other classes with harshness and arrogance. Charges of corruption and official misconduct were not publicly

investigated. The Government, in fact, was shielding civil servants from prosecution by declaring in Act XVIII of 1850 that they were not to be held responsible if they had acted in their official capacity. The punishment inflicted on them for the most serious faults had been nominal.

Promotions should be made without distinction between the covenanted and the uncovenanted, between the European and the Indian, solely on the ground of merit. Public services should be thrown open to competition by British youths in the United Kingdom and native youths in India. When appointed after a competitive examination, there should be complete equality as regards salary and status between the European and the Indian: thus alone could the distinction due to colour be avoided, as intended by the Charter Act of 1833. Besides, the glaring distinctions between the covenanted and the uncovenanted services should be abolished, so as to impart "a healthy tone to all classes of public officers": one of such distinctions was, for example, that the covenanted servant could not be dismissed without trial by a commission, while the uncovenanted might be removed without any proved misconduct at the mere pleasure of his superior officer; again, the covenanted official was

allowed opportunity to recruit his health with small loss of salary, while the uncovenanted, in most cases, "on the condition of giving up his post".

The Company's Courts, the petitioners said, were not so constituted as to offer justice to the natives. It was a cause of dissatisfaction that there was one Court for Europeans with competent judges, another for natives with thoroughly incompetent ones. "There should be equal laws and good courts for all classes of Her Majesty's subjects, and not one set of laws and courts for British-born subjects and another set of laws and courts for natives". Further, the Magistrates acted in the double capacity of Judges and Superintendents of police. Hence, they were predisposed to convict those brought before them for trial. They exercised powers not given to Magistrates in any civilised country.

The Civil and Criminal Courts should be remodelled. One uniform rule of procedure should be adopted. The Sudder Court and the Supreme Court should be amalgamated.

Finally, the petitioners declared that the Government should sever its connection with ecclesiastical establishments. Bishops and other highly paid church officials should not be supported from the public revenue for the benefit of a small body of Christians. All sects should support the ministers of their own religion.

The Draft of Desiderata prepared a little later by the Association was essentially identical with the petition which it had sent to the Parliament. On one point, however, the Draft contained some supplementary material. The petition had suggested the passing of a Declaratory Act - which today would be regarded as a safeguard - providing for the non-interference of the Legislative Council and of Parliament with the religious institutions of Indians, unless a change was desired by the Indians themselves. But how was the desire of the people to be ascertained? The Draft suggested that if a change in any Indian religious institution was intended, "the opinion of the inhabitants of every town with a population of 5,000 and more should first be ascertained. The intended bill should only be introduced with the consent of a "preponderating majority". It is not clearly stated who exactly are meant by "the inhabitants of every town". In spite of the vagueness, however, the principle of the referendum in an undeveloped form is implicit in such a provision. The petitioning Zemindars of Bengal would not have dared to propose a referendum on political questions; but religion was on a different footing, and was not to be tampered with without the people's consent.[1]

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1. Petition to Parliament from members of the B.I.A. . . . . relative to the East India Company's Charter; and Draft of Desiderata for British India.

Some of the proposals contained in the petition were adopted by the Government in course of the following decade. The covenanted Civil Service was thrown open to competition in England in 1853.[1] The Queen's Proclamation guaranteed non-interference with religious matters.[2] The Legislative Council of India was set up in 1861 as a body distinct from the Executive, and admitting some non-official elements,[3] though the Law Commission was not abolished until nine years later. The Sudder Courts and the Supreme Court were amalgamated by the High Courts Act.[4] The suggestion with regard to the jurisdictio of the District Courts, however, was not adopted until 1883, when it was embodied in the Ilbert Bill.

From an analysis of the Petition it is clear that the men who drew it up were well-versed in Western political practice. It is also clear from a number of other Petitions submitted from time to time as also from the Annual Reports

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1. Cambridge History of ~~the Br. Empire,~~ India, VI, p.16.
2. Queen's Proclamation, 1858, ap. Mukerji, Indian Constitutional Documents, p.433.
3. Indian Councils Act, 1861, ap. Mukherji, op. cit., pp.191 et. seq.
4. Indian High Courts Act, 1861, ap. Mukherji, op. cit., p.392.

issued by the Committee of Management that the Association was actively engaged in discussing administrative affairs. Some of their petitions had the desired effect; that, for example, submitted in 1853 for the reform of the Salt Law, condemned as unjust to the Zemindars.[1] But except in one or two particulars the Charter Act of 1853 took little heed of the Zemindars' wishes. In a petition drawn up on April 18, 1854, the Association expressed its warm approval of section 22 of the Act, providing for the enlargement of the legislative Council. In the same petition it was suggested that the meetings of the Council be thrown open to the press and the public; also that parties who might wish to make representations to it for the amendment of proposed bills or the drafting of new ones be allowed to do so through their agents.[2]

A petition was sent on December 1, 1854, pleading "for the more effectual suppression of affrays concerning the possession of property". It was stated that, besides the incompetence of the police, there were other factors tending to

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1. See Petition regarding the laws enacted to prevent infractions of the monopoly of salt; also, Annual Report for 1854, p.15.

2. Petition relative to making the meetings of the Legislative Council open to the public.

produce frequent breaches of peace: for example, the union of the offices of Police Superintendent and Criminal Judge in the same person, and the exemption of the British-born from the jurisdiction of mufassil Courts. The petitioners suggested that legal protection should be afforded to the ryots from the oppressive measures of the indigo planters. The Association, however, was not in any way a champion of peasants' rights. The same Petition suggested the making of laws to prevent the ryots from forming "combinations", which were frequently entered into with solemn pledges to oppose the planter or the Zemindar. Such combinations were known as ekjotee or dhurmghut.[1]

It may be noted, in passing, that the Association thought much of the necessity of carrying on propaganda in England. Out of the sum of Rs.10,900 received from subscribers in 1854, Rs. 7,187 was remitted to its London Agent. Financial help was also extended to the India Reform Society formed by John Dickinson in the previous year.[2]

With regard to the work done in 1855, the Annual report for that year stated that the progress which had been

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1. Petition for the more effectual suppression of affrays.
2. Annual Report for 1854, p.18.

achieved, though not spectacular, was encouraging and full of promise.[1]

Early in 1856 the Committee of Management sent a Petition to England, addressed to both the Houses of Parliament, praying for the re-constitution of the Legislative Council on a wider and more liberal basis than was provided by the Act of 1853.[2] In July of that year it suggested to the Government the issuing of writs of habeas corpus from district courts, so that tyranny under the false cover of law might not take place.[3] In September it sent a Petition to the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal in support of the Missionaries' Memorial for a commission of inquiry into the condition of the ryots of Bengal. The object of the inquiry would be to learn "how and where to apply the remedy for the long-talked of and generally admitted epidemic social evils which infest these provinces". The petitioners prayed that a majority of the Commissioners should be non-official, and that a majority

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1. Annual Report for 1855, p.20.
2. Annual Report for 1856, p.2.
3. A Petition on the bill to provide for the execution of criminal progress.

of these non-official members of the Commission should be natives of Bengal.[1]

In November, the Association protested against the Chowkeedari Bill, replacing the village watchman by the official police force, and imposing a new tax in order to defray the expenses of the additional police that had to be appointed. If, however, the police tax was thought to be absolutely necessary, "landed proprietors" and agricultural persons should be exempted from it; otherwise, "the covenant of the Permanent Settlement" would be broken.[2] When the Chowkeedari Bill was passed in spite of this protest, the Association appealed to the Court of Directors on July 24, 1857. The Directors sent a reply on January 19,1858, through the Government of India that they did not see any reason for the repeal of the Acts. Further, they expressed their doubt as to how far a document signed by the Honorary Secretary of an Association might represent the opinion even of any class or section of the public.[3] On receiving this reply the Committee of Management stated that it was unable to see

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1. Public Correspondence and Petitions of the B.I.A., pp. 15,16.

2. A Petition to the Legislative Council on the Chowkeedari bill.

3. Selections No.11 from the Public Correspondence, petitions and memorials of the B.I.A., p.23.

the soundness of the reasoning which had led the Court to refrain from disallowing the Act.[1]

While the Association was trying to win new rights, it was determined to maintain existing ones. The Chowkeedari bill, among others, was criticised as a violation of the Permanent Settlement. It was stated that not only the Zemindars but also "the educated and the industrial classes" regarded the continuance of that Settlement as a political necessity. Any law directed against it would be felt as the first attack upon an institution hitherto regarded by all as inviolable.[2]

The Annual Report for 1857 regretted that the year had been marked by a great disaster. A gigantic insurrection had threatened to destroy peace and order, and produced misery and bloodshed on an immense scale. The very existence of the state being threatened, all agitation for reforms had been suspended, and the mutiny had thus paralysed the hands of the Committee of Management for the greater part of the year. The Committee lost no occasion of demonstrating to

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1. Annual Report for 1858, p.13.

2. See Petition relative to the Chowkeedari Bill, ap. Selections, II, ^ Petition on the bill to improve the law relating to sales ofland for arrears of revenue.

Government the unflinching loyalty of the landholders, and declared that the best interests of Indians were associated with the maintenance of British rule. The Government of India, in reply, thanked it for expressing the loyal sentiments of "an influential and intelligent body of Hindu gentlemen", and re-stated the policy of non-interference in religious matters.[1]

In 1858 the Association started to agitate against the inequality in the eye of the law between British-born subjects and the natives. The Committee wrote a letter to John Bright, President of the India Reform Society, on the subject.[2] Next year, at a monthly general meeting held on June 30, 1859, complaints were made of the acquittal of Europeans by petty juries in the Supreme Court. The Chairman referred to a minute of Sir Charles Trevelyan, the Governor of Madras, and said that if reform was urgently needed in Madras, it was still more urgently needed in Bengal. The Advocate-General of Madras (Trevelyan said) had pointed out some grossly improper acquittals of European offenders by Calcutta juries. The Chairman observed that such miscarriages of justice had

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1. Annual Report for 1857, pp.5, 6, 21-3.

2. Annual Report for 1858, p.16.

created among Indians a feeling of insecurity and a disrespect for the Supreme Court. But the mere reconstruction of the jury list would not remedy the evil. The remedy lay in the promotion of friendly feelings towards Indians on the part of those classes of Europeans from whom the jurors were drawn. Sir Charles Trevelyan had rightly observed that the high-handed insolence of a dominant race was the greatest danger to which a power like the British in India was liable. The mutiny had let loose the spectre of race antagonism. It had to be remembered, as Lord Stanley had said, that in India Englishmen of all ranks were collectively and individually "representative men", and the crime of one might in the eyes of Indians discredit the whole English nation.[1]

At a general meeting held in the next month, Joykissen Mukherji drew the attention of the members to the sweeping remarks made by Sir Mordaunt Wells on the national character of Indians. The judge had said, in course of his charge to the Grand Jury at a Criminal Sessions of the Supreme Court, that Indians were a nation of cheats, liars and perjurors.[2] The Association strongly protested against these remarks.

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1. Monthly Proceedings for June, 1859, p.2. See also Annual Report for 1859, p.20.

2. ~~The~~ Monthly Proceedings for July, 1859, p.4. See also Sir Mordaunt Wells and public opinion in India.

In the same year, a Petition was despatched to the House of Commons. It hailed with delight the Crown's assumption of direct rule over the "Asiatic Empire", and suggested a series of reforms, legislative and judicial, as well as administrative. These were identical with those suggested in the Petition of 1852, though the question of education was now more strongly stressed. This Petition throws an interesting side-light on the attitude of the Zemindars towards the existing revenue settlement in Bengal: it was not only to be maintained in that presidency, but extended throughout India. The mutiny, the Petition said, had well established the political usefulness of a body of permanently settled land-owners. "A comparison of the loyal and of the disloyal throughout the late period of crisis . . . will . . . show the tendency of a permanent

settlement to create a powerful class who feel their interest as one with that of the ruling power, and who are satisfied with their position".[1]

John Bright presented the petition to the House of Commons,[2] but it failed to evoke a discussion. This was regretted by the Committee of Management, but it warmly approved of the new revenue settlement of Oudh which strongly favoured the landed class as opposed to the cultivator. The settlement was said to be an act of "wisdom, foresight and ..... statesmanship".[3]

It also appears that the Government had begun to pay more heed to the Association. In 1859 it solicited the opinion of the Committee regarding the establishment of cheap schools for the masses.[4] In 1860 it asked the Committee to nominate a member of the Indigo Commission.[5] In the next

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1. ~~Ibid.~~ petition to the House of Commons, 1859.
2. Annual Report for 1859, p.3.
3. Ibid, pp.V,VI. See also Petition to the House of Commons, 1860.
4. Annual Report for 1859, p.11
5. Monthly Proceedings for June, 1860, p.2.

year, when a bill was introduced for the imposition of a tax on tobacco and pan, it wanted to know the views of the Association with regard to the manner of levying the tax.[1] It seems that the mutiny was the turning point in the relations between the Government and the organized Zemindars of Bengal.

A petition was again presented to the House of Commons in 1860, repeating the demands for legislative, judicial and administrative changes. It suggested the withdrawal of Judges from the Legislative Council, and advocated the election of members by "representative associations".[2]

In November 1860, at a monthly meeting, the bill proposing the continuance of Act III of 1858, entitled "An Act to amend the law relating to the arrest of State prisoners", was discussed. The object of the bill, it was said, was to empower the local Governments to arrest Indians at will without any cause being shown. Arrested persons could be kept imprisoned in a jail or a fortress for any

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1. Correspondence between the Govt. of Bengal and the B.I.A., 1862. See also Report of B.I.A. for May, 1862.

2. Petition to the House of Commons, 1860.

length of time. Such a measure was contrary to the Royal Proclamation, and to the fundamental principles of liberty. The special circumstances which had necessitated the Act had passed away, and its renewal could not be justified.[1]

A Petition was sent to the Legislative Council of India against a Bill designed to simplify the procedure of the Criminal Courts. The Bill was condemned, first, on the ground that it perpetuated the exemption of Her Majesty's British-born subjects from the jurisdiction of mufasil Criminal Courts. This legal inequality, based on distinctions of domicile and colour, was opposed alike to justice and sound policy. Secondly, the Bill withdrew from Indian Magistrates the power of holding preliminary enquiries regarding British-born subjects, or arresting them, or committing them for trial or before the Supreme Court. This power had been given to the Indian Magistrates ~~by an Act of Parliament,~~ more than a quarter of a century before; and during this period no abuse of that authority had occurred to warrant this exhibition of distrust. The desired change was a "retrograde move in legislation", and would "complete the barrier to justice". Already the poorer classes found it

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1. Monthly Proceedings, for November, 1860.

hard to secure justice, owing to the distance of the Courts; far more difficult for them it was to secure justice against British-born offenders; and now, with the power of preliminary investigation withdrawn from the hands of nearly two-thirds of the Magistracy, there would be practically a complete denial of justice to the poor. It was difficult to understand why one class of officials should be maintained for offenders of one colour and another class for offenders of a different colour.

Further, the petitioners stated, the Bill authorised the Magistrates to issue warrants on mere suspicion without any specific charge. This power was liable to be greatly abused. It made the acceptance of bail dependent on a full investigation of the charge. In the mufasil Courts, where procedure was dilatory, such an investigation might take three or four weeks, during which time the accused would have to remain in prison, though, on trial, he might be found to be entirely innocent.

The petitioners felt grateful that the Bill promulgated the system of trial by jury, which, they claimed, was an "ancient institution of India". But the provision that even the unanimous verdict of a jury might be set aside by the presiding officer at will was opposed to the self-respect of the jurors, and would considerably diminish their

interest in the discharge of their public duty. Unless the unanimous verdict of a jury was held to be binding upon the Court, trial by jury would be "more a fiction than a reality".

The petitioners, finally, regretted that the administrative authorities lived apart from the people and above them, in violation of the principle that the State was but an aggregate of the people and officials were nothing more than public servants.[1]

The same year, 1860, saw the activities of the Association over two other questions of great importance. One was the Indigo question, which will be discussed in the next chapter. The other was the question of public control over the finances. The imposition of the Income Tax emboldened the Zemindars of Bengal to make a demand, which they had never before made, of being consulted on financial matters. The Committee of Management applied to the Government for a detailed account of revenue and expenditure. The Government replied that the Committee had no right to ask for such documents; that the required information might be given to a body ofmerchants, but not to a political body which occupied a position similar to that of the anti-Corn

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1. Petition to the Legislative Council of India, December 31, 1860.

Law League in England.

The Association, however, continued to attack the Income Tax which was said to infringe the Permanent Settlement. It also suggested that the new tax was unnecessary, since the budget could be balanced by other means such as a reduction of expenditure, which would relieve the economic strain. The Army was a heavy drain on Indian resources. On December 20 a public meeting at the Town Hall discussed the subject and drew up a Petition for Parliament.[1]

In July, next year, the Committee waited in deputation upon the Governor-General with an Address on the Income Tax. That Tax, it was complained, was a source of oppression. If new revenue was urgently needed, it could be obtained by an increase of the Salt Tax. Lord Canning replied that the Income Tax could not be abolished, but the law relating to it could be amended. He invited the Committee to nominate one or two of its members to confer with a member of the Government. He said, besides, that to substitute a Salt Tax for an Income Tax would be to relieve the rich at the expense of the poor.[2]

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1. Annual Report for 1860, pp.17-20.

2. Monthly Proceedings, July, 1861, pp.7-9. See also Annual Report for 1861, p.11.

Three petitions were despatched to the House of Commons in 1861. The first was on the re-modelling of the Legislative Council. Besides repeating the two former prayers- the admission of non-official elements, and the separation of the functions of Legislator and Judge in the same person - it added another: that a member of the Council should have the right of calling for information on "all matters coming within its sphere". This request was specially made by the petitioners owing to the fact that the right of the Legislative Council to ask for information on an executive matter had been denied by the Government during the previous year; and the Association's demand was a covert proposal to extend the powers of the Legislative Council beyond mere legislative functions.

The second petition stated that the exclusion of Indians from important posts deprived them of a highly valued right. The Queen's proclamation had declared that race or creed would not constitute a barrier to office. It was, however, impossible for Hindus (the Association loosely uses the term "Natives of India") to become candidates for the Indian Civil Service examination without violating their religious observances. This could be remedied by enabling them to compete for the Service without leaving the country. Competitive examinations should be held in the chief presidency towns.

The third petition stated that the proposed exclusion of Indian Judges and pleaders from the High Courts which were to be formed would produce grievous discontent and heart-burning. Such an unjust proposal should be abandoned.[1]

With regard to the first petition, the bill subsequently passed took an important step forward towards reform. Legislative Councils were conceded to the presidencies. The admission of a non-official element, both European and Indian, was provided for. The so-called anomaly of Judges exercising the task of Legislators was removed. The second petition failed of its purpose. The prayer contained in the third one, however, was granted.[2] The Committee hailed the reforms of 1861 with eagerness. It did not approve of the constitution of the new legislatures, but accepted the changes "on the whole as important, though small, instalments of reform".[3]

The Report for the year 1864 reveals that the Association was now prepared to take part in the work of social reform. In that year its Committee received a communication from the Government of Bengal with regard to a

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1. Petitions of the B.I.A. to the House of Commons, 1861

2. Annual Report for 1861, pp. 1 et. seq., see also Monthly Proceedings, for Oct. 1861, p.4.

3. ~~Annual Report for 1864, p.8.~~

case of suttee which had recently occurred in the district of Monghyr: the Committee was asked to help the suppression of this "barbarous rite". A special meeting of the Association was called, and a resolution passed, regretting the case of suttee and expressing horror and indignation. It was also decided to draw the attention of Zemindars to their duty of awakening in the minds of the superstitious a feeling of abhorrence towards the custom.[1] This development in the social ideas of the Association is significant. Raja Radhakant, worn with age, was still its nominal President. It is difficult to say whether his attitude towards suttee had entirely changed since the days when he, along with other orthodox Hindus, had prayed Parliament for its perpetuation; if it had not, it is clear that the society over which he presided was now uninfluenced by his voice and prepared to act against his opinions.

The Petitions presented in the succeeding years retained and developed the principles which the Association had already formed, but no new demand of a striking nature was made. Increasing attention, however, began to be paid to questions relating to the Indian Civil Service. A Meeting

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1. Annual Report for 1864, p.8.

held on July 19, 1865, protested against the reduction of the maximum age of candidates for the examination from twenty-two to twenty-one. It was said that this measure would be an additional barrier to enrolment to the Service, so far as Indians were concerned. The barriers that already existed were disheartening. Indians had to learn English and compete with English candidates in their mother tongue, They had to be courageous enough to cross the ocean in defiance of social taboos, and live far away from home, incurring heavy expenses. The new age-limit of twenty-one would, above all, make it almost impossible for them to achieve success. The Association drew up a memorial based on these grounds. praying the Secretary of State to make twenty-one the minimum and twenty-five the maximum age-limit.[1] A report of the meeting was sent to Dadabhai Naoroji, who was then in England, and his opinion was solicited. Naoroji discussed the question at a meeting held on December 19,1865, of the London Indian Society, which he had founded. He stated that Indians should not ask for a higher age-limit, since it was a humiliating admission of their inferiority to English youths. Unless they showed themselves at twenty-one capable of the same degree of ability as the

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1. Proceedings, July 19,1865.

English candidates, they did not deserve to be enrolled in the service. This view was strongly opposed by W.C. Bonnerji, who spoke in favour of the reform advocated by the British Indian Association. In Bengal, he said, a student completed his University career at twenty-one, and at once became disqualified for the Civil Service examination.[1] The meeting, however, declared by a majority vote its support of the views of Dadabhai Naoroji.[2]

The same meeting also discussed the marks allotted to Sanskrit. The marks first fixed by Lord Macaulay's Committee were 375. The Civil Service Commissioners, probably desiring to give a fairer chance to Indians, in their Fourth Report raised them to 500. In their Seventh Report issued in 1862, they expressed their satisfaction at the increase in the number of candidates who took up Sanskrit. In July, 1863, Satyendra Nath Tagore was the first Indian to pass the examination; and in October of the same year the marks were reduced from 500 to 375. Was it due to Tagore's success? If so, Dadabhai Naoroji said, it was much to be regretted. England should "religiously"

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1. Proceedings of the London Indian Society, 1865, pp.6,7,11,28.
2. Ibid, pp.37-38.

keep good faith in matters, both large and small. For "small matters, though not immediate in their effect, leave their small sores, which in time accumulate and burst with disastrous results".[1]

In a half-yearly General Meeting held on July 31, 1866, the British Indian Association considered the remarks of Dadabhai Naoroji with regard to the question of the age-limit. Entirely disagreeing with his opinion, it re-affirmed the view that the maximum of age limit should be raised to twenty-five.[2]

Naoroji, however, was a firm advocate of the idea that competitive examinations for appointments to the Civil Service should be held also in India, and that Indians should be admitted to a larger share in the administrative task. He headed the deputation sent by the East India Association[3] on August 21,1867, to wait on the Secretary of State and present a memorial to him, containing the above noted prayer. The Committee of Management wrote to the Secretary of the East India Association, thanking him for this activity. It reminded

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1. Ibid, pp.9-11.
2. B.I.A., Half-yearly General Meeting, July 31,1866,p.8.
3. Founded by Naoroji early in 1867.

him that the British Indian Association had been interested in the question for fifteen years, and had more than once petitioned Parliament on the subject.[1]

The British Indian Association was a closed body, dominated by class interest. Steered by its Committee, it worked through monthly and special meetings, in which discussions took place for the purpose of drawing up petitions to the Legislative Council and the Parliament. The Association, however, held certain political ideas which were calculated to appeal to that section of educated Bengalis who stood unorganised and apart. Such ideas found expression through the medium of public meetings. In those days public meetings were convened by the Sheriff on the written request of a number of citizens of Calcutta. The Sheriff used to open the meeting, and ask it to elect its own chairman. It appears that the leading members of the British Indian Association mainly were responsible for the public meetings which were held in Calcutta from 1853 up to the middle of the sixties.

On July 29,1853, a public meeting was held in the Town Hall on the request of Raja Radhakant, Iswar Chandra

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1. Naoroji, Admission of educated natives into the I.C.S., pp.38,39. See also Indian Worthies, Vol.I, pp.183-4.

Singh, Devendranath Tagore, Ramgopal Ghose, Peary Chand Mitra and others. Its object was to consider the propriety of petitioning Parliament on the subject of the proposed reforms for the Government of India. This is said to have been the most crowded meeting held up to that time in Calcutta. The audience was variously estimated as numbering between 3,000 and 10,000.[1] A resolution was moved that the scheme of reform outlined by Sir Charles Wood in his Parliamentary speech of June 3 of the year had disappointed the Indian community. Ramgopal Ghose seconded the motion. He said that the provision of the Charter Act of 1833, forbidding the exclusion of Indians from public services by reason of their race, colour or creed, had become a dead letter; and it would remain so, since the Civil Service would continue to be exclusive. To ascertain India's grievances the House of Commons had appointed a Committee, which had examined witnesses; but of the forty-four witnesses only two were Indians; the others were, besides being Europeans, nearly all connected with the Government. Sir Charles Wood's plan of a competitive examination would benefit the people of England, but not of India: it would hardly be possible for Indians to send their sons abroad on the remote chance of succeeding in the competition.

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1. Report of the proceedings of a public meeting held on the 29th July, 1853, p.3.

Again, the new reform scheme excluded Indians from the proposed Legislative Council. The system, Ramgopal said, which gave Indians high education and yet withheld from them the prizes of public service was anomalous and absurd. "Better far to declare openly that India should be governed not for the benefit of the governed, but for the sole advantage of the governors. Better to do away at once with the freedom of the press, and at one fell swoop abolish all vestiges of any political rights and privileges - prohibit public meetings, and proclaim through the length and breadth of the land that the hand that wrote a petition be lopped off on the block".[1]

Joykissen Mukherji also supported the resolution and brought in a new point. The excise system, he said, was sapping the morals of the community. The late British India Society, the missionaries, the press, and large bodies of the people had from time to time protested against it, but in vain. A petition recently sent to a public official by a large village community opposed the establishment of liquor shops in tempting places, under the direct authority of the Government - not to meet the wishes and wants of the people, but without their consent and often against their

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1. Ibid, pp.9-11,15,16.

remonstrances. These shops had the most baneful effect upon the villagers. Many youths, who had been averse to intemperance, had begun to acquire the drinking habit.[1]

On April 6, 1857, a public meeting was held in the Town Hall to agitate for the extension of the criminal jurisdiction of mufasil courts. The ideas expressed were identical with those which were strongly put forward not much later, by the British Indian Association. British-born subjects, it was stated, were virtually allowed to commit the most heinous crimes with impunity. Surprise was expressed at the fact that many of the British in India had violently protested against the proposed bill for removing legal inequality and had stigmatized it as the "Black Act". A resolution was moved declaring that all British subjects in India should be under the same laws and the same law-courts; and that no section of the community should, by reason of race or religion or official position, possess any exclusive privilege in the eyes of the law.[2]

Kissory Chand Mitra seconded the resolution. He drew a lurid picture of "poverty-stricken, half-naked ryots"

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1. Ibid, pp.25,26.

2. Report of Proceedings of a public meeting held on April 6, 1857, p.7.

savagely ill-treated by indigo-planters. He called upon his audience to repudiate the false doctrine put forward by the exemptionists that unequals could never be equals. The system of exemption, he said, was a system of oppression, which would become worse in the future, since the extending railway and telegraph services would indefinitely multiply the number of Europeans in the mufasil.[1]

Issur Chander Chunder then spoke, supporting the resolution. The law, he said, should be for the well-being of the masses; it should be framed on the Benthamite principle of the greatest happiness to the greatest number.[2]

Speaking subsequently, George Thompson, who was then in India on his second visit, referred to a meeting of Europeans which had lately been held to oppose the abolition of the legal privilege which the British-born subjects enjoyed. In that meeting, he said, there had been a good deal of talk about the liberties of Englishmen - "about Magna Charta, and the Bill of Rights, and the trial by Jury and the British Lion" - but nothing at all about the rights of Indians. That

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1. Ibid, pp.19,20,25.

2. Ibid, p.34.

meeting had drawn up a petition to Parliament, inserting in it sweeping and unjustified remarks; no class of natives, the petition had declared, was fit to have judicial powers over Europeans. George Thompson added that if trial by jury, the writ of habeas corpus and justice which was incorruptible and beyond dictation were the birth-rights of Englishmen, they were also the birth-rights of their fellow subjects.[1]

Joykissen Mukherji said that when, by the Charter Act of 1833, Europeans were permitted to hold lands and settle in this country, a law should have been simultaneously enacted to bring them under the jurisdiction of the mufasil courts. The monstrous distinction which had been kept up was unparalleled in the civilised world.[2]

The meeting held on September 12, 1859, may be noted, although it was attended mainly by Europeans, having been organized by industrialists and merchants. One of the resolutions stated that the people should be fully informed about the "expenditure and income of the empire"; a full, financial statement should be placed annually before the

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1. Ibid, pp.43, 45, 61.

2. Ibid, pp.71, 75. See also A Hindu, The Mutinies, the Government and the people, pp.16,22,23; John Freeman, A Reply to the Memorandum of the East India Company, pp. 24, 26-7; Ramgopal Ghose, Public Speeches; Archibald Hope, The Black Acts.

Legislative Council. Another resolution declared that the existing Legislative Council was unfit for its task, and should be reformed by the addition of "independent and practical men" as members. "If we are called upon to pay", one of the speakers said, "we want to know the reason why and will know it: if we are to pay for Government, we want to have some means of securing that that Government shall be good".[1]

An account of the public meetings of the time remains incomplete unless mention is made ofRamgopal Ghose to whose "burning eloquence" Surendra Nath Banerji has paid a warm tribute.[2] Born of humble parentage in 1815, he educated himself and joined the Hindu College. Here, under the influence of Derozio, he became a staunch reformer. His courage and determination, however, were tempered with foresight. After leaving the Hindu College, he secured with the help of David Hare the position of a petty clerk on a mercantile firm. Within a few years he became a prosperous merchant, and a partner in the firm of Kelsall and Ghose, which had connections in England and did business in metal and piecegoods.

Ramgopal made his name as a writer first by sending a series of articles on Inland Transit Duties to the Gyananyeshan. The articles were so clear and incisive that they are

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1. Report of a public meeting held on the 12th September, 1859, pp.10,13.

2. S.N. Banerji, Speeches (edited by Jageshar Mitra), vol. IV, p.5.

said to have made a strong impression upon the Government and influenced its action. Ramgopal then accepted the editorial charge of that journal for a short time. His next project was the founding of the Bengal Spectator. Thus, while engaged in commerce, he found time for journalism. But soon he acquired far more prominence as an orator than as a writer. Realising the value of debates, he took part in the establishment of the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge. He helped zealously when George Thompson came to Calcutta to form the Bengal British India Society. His interest in politics increased and found a field of activity in the British Indian Association when it was established. He continued to be one of its leading members until his death in 1868.

Ramgopal took part in every political movement of the time, and agitated for the abolition of the legal privilages of British-born subjects, the admission of Indians into the Legislative Council and the Civil Service, and the extension of useful public works. For his agitation to secure legal equality he was assailed by a section of Europeans, and had to give up his position as Vice-President of the Agri-Horticultural Society. But his influence with the Government steadily strengthened, resulting in his appointment

on a number of committees, such as the Police Committee of 1845 and the Small-pox Committee of 1850. He was a member of the Council of Education from 1848 to 1855, and also served for some time as an Honorary Magistrate and a Justice of the Peace. He was a member of the Bengal Legislative Council for two years from October, 1862.

Ramgopal was deeply interested in education, and looking upon the Medical College as a great experiment, he offered it his warm support. He also encouraged students to go abroad for higher studies.

While being a prominent member of the British Indian Association, Ramgopal did not sink his identity in it. He was bold enough to go against the wishes of the Zemindars on important questions such as the Income Tax. With regard to this he said: "I . . . . . have always considered the Income Tax a just one on principle. It has doubtless been felt by many as a personal hardship, but it cannot be denied that if we wish to enjoy the blessings of peace, it is our duty to contribute our quota towards the expense of maintaining it".[1]

As a patriot, politician, speaker and social reformer, as well as a successful merchant, Ramgopal Ghose was

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1. Report of the proceedings of a meeting held on the 25th February, 1862, p.4.

one of the foremost men of his time.[1]

Another Bengali who deserves much more than passing notice is Kristo Das Pal. He was the brilliant successor, in the field of journalism, of Harish Chunder Mukherji. He was the successor of Harish Chunder also in the field of politics. Having worked as the editor of the Hindoo Patriot and as a leading member of the British Indian Association for less than a decade, Harish Chunder had been removed by premature death. His place was soon taken by Kristo Das Pal. Born in a middle-class family in April, 1838, Kristo Das received a good school and college education. As a student of the Oriental Seminary he gave new life to an existing society called "Calcutta Literary Free Debating Club". The young student of fifteen showed an admirable, if precocious, understanding of politics. He attended almost all the meetings of the Club, reported the proceedings, and was to this body what he was to become later to the British Indian Association. At a meeting held on June 1, 1856, he read an essay entitled "Young Bengal Vindicated", which was published as a pamphlet. When he was

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1. Calcutta Review, 1868, vol. 46, pp.505 et. seq. See also Lethbridge, Rantanu Lahiri, pp.185-7.

a student of the newly founded Metropolitan College, he began to contribute to the Morning Chronicle, edited by his Professor, Captain Harris, without revealing his identity to him. About the same time he founded the short-lived Calcutta Monthly Magazine. Leaving college in 1857, he became a regular contributor to a number of newspapers, and won the support of William Cob Hurry, who was then editor of the Englishman. In 1858 he published a book entitled "The Mutinies, the Government and the People". In December of the same year he obtained the post of Assistant Secretary to the British Indian Association - on a monthly salary of Rs.125. Three years later he became the editor of the Hindoo Patriot. In this dual capacity he wielded no little measure ofpower and found an outlet for his immense energy. For nearly a decade he shared the political leadership with Ramgopal Ghose. His worth was recognised by the Government, and he was nominated in 1872 a member of the Bengal Legislative Council. Still higher honours were to come. When the Bengal Tenancy Bill was under consideration, the idea occurred to Lord Ripon ofappointing a representative of the Zemindars to his Council. The best way to do so was to ask the British Indian Association to choose one. The choice fell on Kristo Das Pal, who, accordingly, became a member of the

Legislative Council of India in February, 1883. He died in July of the following year.

"As a public speaker he stood far ahead of any of his countrymen", the Englishman wrote, "and his utterances were in many respects superior even to those of his colleagues whose mother tongue was English and whose training had been entirely British".[1] The technique of his speeches, however, was not calculated to win the applause of his audience. Bengalis were fond of fiery speeches. They wanted a speaker to be, as a biographer of Kristo Das puts its, "Not only animated but agitated".[2] Kristo Das spoke with calm dignity and precision.[3] He cared more for argument than for rhetoric, and his appeal was directed much less to the emotions than to the intellect. In this respect he was in advance of his time. In the style of his writings, too, he outstripped the contemporary standard. His prose was simple, accurate, vigorous, marked more by the force of logic than by that of a well-turned phrase. When he had to marshal facts and figures, tabulate results, cite authorities, detect fallacies

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1. Englishman, July 25, 1884.
2. N.N. Ghose, Kristo Das Pal, p.70.
3. See K.D. Pal, Speeches and Minutes.

and advance arguments, he was at his best. A strong sense of symmetry lent distinction to his leading articles. Harish Chunder Mukherji wrote good English, and his style was more attractive than that of his successor. But Kristo Das showed his superiority in his grasp of details, his able discussion of current topics, and his reviewing of Administration reports and Financial Statements.

In his political ideas, however, Kristo Das Pal was not in advance of his time. It has been rightly said that he had learnt to lead men by following them. He did not introduce any new ideas. All that he did, as a politician and journalist was to give expression to ideas which were then agitating enlightened minds. He helped to crystallize what was in a fluid state. His attitude was one of unswerving loyalty to the Government, and steady championship of the rights of the people, in so far as those rights were not in conflict with the rights of the dominant power. He was sensitive to the social status of Indians and sharply felt the insult done to ~~him~~ them, not infrequently, by Europeans, with such remarks as "those horrid natives" and "niggers". He was a strong advocate of the Black Acts, and was not afraid to pass severe comments on the uncontrolled export of grain, the repeal of import duties on cotton goods and the burdening of the Indian budget with a

large military expenditure.

His conception of Indian nationalism did not reveal him as a far-sighted political leader, since he believed, with John Bright, that India should be broken up, for administrative purposes, into a number ofmutually independent governments. Though a nationalist - in a narrow sense of the word - he supported a proposal likely to retard the growth of Indian nationalism, if not ofnational sentiment.

As Assistant Secretary of the British Indian Association, Kristo Das Pal presents a figure of much historical interest. The secretaryship of that body, an honorary post, was held by a landowner. For practical purposes, it was the Assistant Secretary who counted above all others. Besides, Kristo Das had no little personal influence with the Zemindars, who, in grateful recognition of his services to their class, made him their representative in the Imperial Legislative Council. But it is a matter of regret that Kristo Das, the political leader of his countrymen, insisted far more on the rights of the Zemindar class than on the rights of the people. The landowners of Bengal owed him a great debt ofgratitude. Week after week he conducted an agitation to hinder any infringement of the Permanent Settlement. But one looks in vain through his speeches and

writings for a criticism of the conduct oflandowners - men who often had no higher sense of duty than to live in luxury and indolence and increase their wealth. By employing his talents to an unworthy cause, Kristo Das won prosperity and influence, but lost the right and the power to lead the vital, rapidly growing middle classes.

At the end of the sixties, Kristo Das Pal no longer was what he had been at their beginning. The journal which he edited was still the best of its kind in Bengal, but its claim to predominance no longer went unchallenged. A small section of educated Bengalis were already in the field, profoundly dissatisfied with the selfish ideas of the old school, deeply inclufnced by ~~the thought of~~ Mazzini and Mill. New journals, which spoke much more boldly than the Hindoo Patriot, sped on the road to influence. Kristo Das Pal still remained, for some time, the nominal leader of his countrymen. Backed by the wealthy Zemindars ofBengal, able and full of energy, he became with the passing years the symbol of a dead decade, a revered relic.[1]

A similar fate overtook the British Indian Association at about the same time. The Assodiation had done its work.

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1. N.N. Ghose, op. cit; see also R.G. Sanyal, Life of Kristo Das Pal; and Escott, Pillars of the Empire.

It was the first organized political body in British India, monolithic in structure, determined to win power. It had held regular meetings, discussed legislative proposals and made its own reform plans. It had appointed agents in London and submitted to Parliament petition after petition. Unrecognized by the Government at the beginning it had its own nominees in the Legislative Council of India at the end. But the Association had failed to lead the country, representing, as it did, only the landowners, and having been resolved to uphold their interests at any cost. While it was working for its narrow purpose, the middle classes were developing in numbers and strength. The spread of education was the chief cause of this growth. The class of professional men was of much more varied composition than the other, but its dominant sections were the lawyers and writers: the writers spread new ideas; the lawyers built a machine. The Indian Association was the machine, worked by middle-class Bengalis, and owing its origin to a wide support which the landed aristocrats had never sought.

It is necessary to go back across a period of years and say a few words on political societies engaged on working in England for India. Fourteen months after the founding of

the British Indian Association, on March 12, 1853, a meeting was organized in London by John Dickinson with H.D. Seymour, a member of Parliament, in the chair. The meeting constituted itself as the "India Reform Society", and passed a resolution declaring that the Committee of both Houses of Parliament, which was investigating the nature and results of British rule in India, should not confine its inquiry to the evidence of officials, "without reference to the petitions and wishes of the more intelligent of the natives of India". A Committee was formed, composed mainly of members of Parliament. Among these were John Dickinson, Danby Seymour, J.F.B. Blacket, John Bright, George Thompson, R. Cobden and Viscount Goderich (who became, later, the Marquis of Ripon). John Dickinson was named the Honorary Secretary of the Society. In this capacity he worked for nine years, and then for a further period of seven years he was the Society's Chairman.[1]

Born in December 1815, the son ofan eminent paper manufacturer, John Dickinson studied at Eton, and then went to schools on the continent. While studying abroad, he inbibed liberal principles. From 1850 he began to take an active interest in India. In that year and the following he

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1. Bell, Introduction, ap. Last Counsels of an unknown Counsellor, pp.13-14.

contributed to the Times a series of letters on how to promote the supply of Indian cotton to the English mills. He also began efforts to establish a society which would advocate Indian reforms. This he succeeded in doing on March 13, 1853. His book, "India, its Government under a Bureaucracy", which had already appeared, was reprinted in that year and had a large circulation.

The India Reform Society started with thirty-eight members of Parliament on its list. The year 1853 was one of incessant activity. The name of J.F.B. Blackett, member for Newcastle-on-Tyne, should be specially mentioned in this connection. The volumes of Hansard bear evidence to the fact that he was one of the most prominent debaters on the side of Indian reform.

Danby Seymour was another of the active members of the Society. At the end of 1853 he went over to India to see for himself the condition of the people. While on his travels, he sent home a series of letters describing the sufferings of the peasants in Madras and oppression of the police and revenue officials. As a result, the India Reform Society demanded a public inquiry into the matter.[1] On July 11, 1854, Blackett

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1. Bell, op. cit., p.17.

brought forward a motion in the House of Commons condemning the system of assessment and collection of revenue in Madras, and asking that a commission of inquiry be sent there from England. In a bare House characteristic of Indian debates Government was saved from defeat in a division by a small majority of five.[1] It was in consequence of this debate that the Madras Government appointed the well-known "Torture Commission", which confirmed many of Blackett's allegations.[2]

During the Mutiny Dickinson sought to moderate public excitement and prevent insistence on repressive measures, organizing a number of public meetings, which, though well attended, yielded poor results.

Blackett died when the Society was only a year old. Damby Seymour accepted, in 1856, a post under Lord Palmerston's Ministry, as Joint Secretary to the Board of Control, and had therefore to give up the chairmanship of the society. On his retirement, Bright was elected Chairman. This, normally, would have strengthened the Society, but it did not, since Bright, with Cobden, was then at the height of his unpopularity by

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1. Hansard, 1854, vol. 135, 43 et seq.

2. See Report of the Torture Commission, ap. Parliamentary Papers, 1854-55, XL, pp.581 et. seq.

reason of his comdemnation of Palmerston's policy in China, and his disapproval of the Crimean War. The slight hold on public attention which the Indian Reform Society had gained was lost in the excitement of the war with Russia.[1]

On June 24, 1858, in the debate on the second reading of the India Bill, Bright delivered his well-known speech on Indian policy and legislation. He started with a criticism of the Government of the East India Company, attacking the system of taxation, the conduct of the police, administration of justice, and neglect of public works. The real activity of the Government, he said, had been directed to conquest and annexation. Then he put forward a plan ofhis own for the better administration of the country. India should be divided up into at least five presidencies, with governments equal in rank, and independent of each other, each controlling its own civil and military affairs. Each should be in direct communication with Whitehall. The Presidency Governor should be assisted by a Council which should include Indian members.

A new policy, Bright continued, was urgently needed. "You may govern India, if you like", he said, "for the good of

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1. Bell, op. cit., pp.21-2.

England, but the good of England must come through the channel of the good of India". The guidingprinciple should be not to plunder Indians, but to trade with them.[1]

Bright's plan was practical, even if it was bold. If adopted, it would probably have hastened the pace of political development. India was an unwieldy unit, in which the introduction of reforms was a staggering task. An autonomous province would have been a fertile field for new experiments. The mammoth whole was only likely to hinder the growth of its component parts.

The India Reform Society received much applause from India,[2] and Harish Mukherji, the editor of the Hindoo Patriot, paid a tribute to its founder. "If India has a friend in England", he wrote, "who has neither spared his purse nor his time to ameliorate her condition, it is he. It was he who collected the liberal members of Parliament in that Indian congress to carry on political warfare in the interests of the down-trodden . . . . . It was he who supplied Bright and Cobden with valuable information regarding

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1. Hansard, 1858, vol. 151, 330 et. seq.

2. See Annual Report of the B.I.A. for 1859.

various perplexing question of Indian politics".[1]

The India Reform Society languished after 1859. The last well-attended meeting took place in the spring of 1861 to consider the indigo question.[2] On this occasion Bright, pleading heavy demands on his time, resigned the chairmanship, and proposed the name of Dickinson as his successor.[3] The proposal was unanimously carried.

Dickinson had always been opposed to the policy of annexation in India. He had attacked Dalhousie on that score. In 1864, he took up the cause of a native state and published two pamphlets entitled "Dhar not Restored" and a "Sequel to Dhar not restored", both of which roused indignation in the minds of Englishmen in India.[4] But Dickinson was honestly convinced that there should be no more extension of British territory in India, and that friendly relations should be established with the native princes; all that the British wanted from India, he said, was friendly relations useful for the purpose of trade.

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1. Bell, op. cit., pp.48-9.
2. For J. Dickinson's views on the question see his Reply to Brahmins and Pariahs.
3. Bell, op. cit., p.32.
4. Englishman, July 7, 1864.

The India Reform Society continued to exist nominally during the seven years in which Dickinson was its Chairman. After that, when ill-health forced him to abandon his work, the society languished and at last vanished. It was only during the first five years of its existence that the society had done useful work. It had thrust the Indian question before the House of Commons, brought the Torture Commission into existence, and rallied radicals like Bright and Cobden under the flag of Indian reform.

Two other political societies discussing Indian affairs were founded in London in the sixties, both of them owing their origin to the efforts of Dadabhai Naoroji. One was the London India Society, comprising the Indians who were in England. The other, the East India Association, admitted as members not only Indians but also Europeans interested in the affairs of India. Lord Lyveden was its President. Among the six Vice-Presidents were Viscount Cranbourne, Lord Harris and the Earl of Shaftesbury. Among those who joined the society were members of Parliament, such as Bright, Fawcett, Cobden and Danby Seymour; there were also Indian Chiefs and princes, Parsees from Bombay, and students from Bengal, such as W.C. Bonnerjee and Manomohan Ghose. There were two kinds of members. Those residing

in the United Kingdom were called resident, and the others non-resident. An annual meeting took place during the Parliamentary session, ten members being required to form a quorum. The annual meeting elected a President, the Vice-Presidents and a Managing Committee. A special meeting might be convened at the desire of five members of the Managing Committee, or on the written request of ten members of the Association.

The object of the Association was to advocate and promote the interests of India by all legitimate means. Information was to be supplied to members of Parliament and the general public on all Indian subjects.[1]

At a meeting held on May 2, 1867, Naoroji read a paper entitled "England's duties to India". Three policies had been urged, he said, with regard to that country. One was that England had conquered India by the sword and must retain it by the sword. This policy was doomed to failure, for no prophet was required to foretell the ultimate result of a struggle between two hundred millions of discontented men and a hundred thousand foreign bayonets. The second policy was, benevolent despotism. That also was futile, and

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1. Journal of the East India Association, vol. I, pp. 1 et. seq. See also Dadabhai Naoroji's Memorial, p.26.

would only lead to discontent and distrust. The third policy, which was implicit in the Queen's Proclamation, was to win the grateful loyalty of the Indian people, and this alone could succeed. Naoroji also made it clear that the greatest misfortune that could befall India was the withdrawal of the British sovereignty.[1]

The moderate views of Dadabhai Naoroji were shared by many members of the Association. The views of W.C. Bonnerjee, however, were more extreme. At a meeting held on July 25, 1867, he read a paper on "Representative and responsible Government for India". He said that the existing constitution could not last, since it was not based on the principle of responsibility to the people, and was regarded by them with complete want of sympathy. He made references to Mill, Mazzini and Austin. He admitted, using the words which Mazzini had employed with reference to Italy, that there was in India "a multitude ..... of men whom circumstances had called together, and whom circumstances might again divide". Still, he declared that India was prepared for representative and responsible

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1. Journal, ut supra, pp.13-5.

Government of the Canadian model.[1]

At a meeting held three months later, Banerjea read an interesting paper on Hindu Marriage Reforms. E.B. Eastwick's paper, on the representation of Indians in the Parliament, read two months after, may also be mentioned.

The Association started well. But it does not seem to have influenced the course of legislation on Indian affairs. Nor was India impressed with its work. All through the seventies, Bengal remained the central stage for the inter-play of social and political forces. And Bengal was not in a mood to pin its faith on a society across the ocean with no roots in its own middle classes. Besides, a new kind of activity, intellectual rather than practical in its main content, had taken hold of that province. It was striving to create a united India. The cry of the time was not even so much for democracy as for nationalism. Poets and politicians alike sought to make their countrymen think in terms of a sub-continent. And they succeeded to a certain extent, though Bharatbarsa, as a single and compact unit, was as yet far less a reality than a vision.

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1. Ibid, pp.82 et. seq.

CHAPTER III

THE INDIGO CRISIS.

The Indian peasant has been accustomed for centuries to bear the yoke of poverty. He looks upon misery as expiation for sins committed in a past life. The believer in Karma philosophy accepts hunger and starvation with unflinching courage. A peasants' revolt in India is, therefore, an extraordinary occurrence. It is this fact that lends an added significance to the storm that swept the villages of Bengal in the year 1860.

The revolt of 1860 should be visualized against a grim background of landlords' oppression. A common saying in those days was, "The landlord's love for his peasantry is like the Muslim's love for his poultry". The uncontrolled exactions of the Zemindars, an Englishman wrote in 1860, were not mellowed by benevolence. Not a child could be born in his household, the writer added, not a son or daughter be given in marriage, nor even death take place, without a visitation of calamity, in the form of additional demands upon the village.[1] But even this oppression with all its

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1. Rural Life in Bengal, pp.65-6. See also Howitt, Colonization and Christianity

ruthlessness never equalled the terror created by the indigo-planters.

The cultivation of the indigo plant had been practised in India, China and America from early times. The Indian dye was first imported into Europe by the middle of the seventeenth century. The Spaniards started to cultivate the plant on an extensive scale in Central America. Then the British took it up in their American and West Indian colonies. When the former colonies were lost, Bengal began to be the principal supplier of the indigo dye. 64,803 maunds of indigo was produced in 1805. Forty years after, the annual output had nearly doubled.[1] By the middle of the century, indigo became one of the chief agricultural products of Lower Bengal. It was cultivated partly on plantations worked by hired labour, and partly on lands which the peasants held by contract from the planters. The first system was called nij, and the second ryothi. On examining the cultivation of thirty factories, it appears that nearly seventy per cent of

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1. Watt, Dictionary of the Economic products of India, vol.IV, pp.391-3. Calcutta Review, 1858, vol. 30, pp.189-91. By the year 1860 the average annual output in Lower Bengal alone was 1,05,000 maunds valued at nearly two crores of rupees. See report of the Indigo Commission, par. 73, ap. Parl. Papers, 1861, XLIV, p.355.

the indigo fields were under the *ryotti* system.[1] The reason was that *nij* cultivation was comparatively unprofitable to the planter. This would seem strange and improbable. How could the planter make more profit by purchasing the crop from peasants working strips of land, than by producing it on a large scale with hired labour?

The answer is that indigo was, to the ryot, a losing crop; in other words, if the ryot cultivated indigo instead of rice, had a good harvest, and sold the plant at its highest price, he had to put up with a loss of Rs. 7 per *bigha*,[2] which was equivalent to seven times the rent of the land. The ryot did not make any gain at all by cultivating indigo, since he was required, in the words of Sir Charles Wood, "to furnish the plant at a price which ..... did not reimburse him for the cost of production".[3]

Clearly, if indigo was unprofitable to its cultivator, it must have been a forced crop, and this implies oppression. The evidence bearing on the subject is complete and conclusive.

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1. Ibid, pp.342-4.

2. Grant, Minute, 17 Dec. 1860, ap. Parl. Papers, 1861, XLV, pp.75,77,91-2.

3. India Office Despatch, 8 April, 1861, ap. Parl.Papers, ut supra, p.127.

Early in 1860, Sir J.P. Grant, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, appointed a Commission to inquire into the question. It consisted of five members: W.S. Seton-Karr, Secretary to the Government of Bengal, was the President; the other members were, Richard Temple, a Civil Servant, Rev. J. Sale, a representative of the missionaries, and W. Fergusson and Chandra Mohan Chatterji, nominees of the Indigo Planters' Association and the British Indian Association respectively. The public sittings of the Commission began on May 18 and terminated on August 14. The number of witnesses examined was 134, of whom 15 were officials, 21 were, or had been, indigo-planters, 8 missionaries, 13 Indian Zemindars and 77 ryots.

The Report, dated August 27, 1860, was signed by Seton-Karr, Sale and Chatterji, and, with a reservation, by Richard Temple. Appended to it was a Minute by Fergusson and Temple. There was another Minute by Fergusson, and a reply to it signed by three of the Commissioners.

A Bengali Zemindar who had experience of indigo planting, was asked by the Commission: "If the ryots have for the last 20 years been unwilling to sow indigo, how then have they gone on cultivating the plant up to the present time?"

He answered: "By numerous acts of oppression and violence, by locking them up in godowns, burning their houses,

beating them, etc."[1]

Ashley Eden, who became, later, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, was asked why he considered the cultivation to be the result not of free choice, but of force. He gave his reasons as follows. First, the ryot found it unprofitable, and would not voluntarily undergo the pecuniary loss for the benefit of the planter. Secondly, it involved a great deal of harassing interference to which no free agent would subject himself. Thirdly, the Criminal Records of Bengal revealed numerous acts of violence to which the planters had to resort in order to keep up the cultivation. Fourthly, the planters themselves admitted that if the ryots were free agents they would not cultivate indigo. Fifthly, it was significant that the planters spent large sums in the purchase of Zemindaries in order to acquire territorial influence and powers of compulsion, without which they would be unable to secure the cultivation. Finally, it was no less significant that as soon as ryots became aware that they were, by law, free agents, they at once refused to grow the indigo plant any more.[2]

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1. Report of the Indigo Commission, Minutes of Evidence, Q.186, ap. Parl. Papers, 1861, XLIV, p.401.

2. Ibid, Q.3574.

Ashley Eden also handed over to the Commission an abstract, compiled from Criminal Records, of forty-nine cases of murder, homicide, riot, arson, dacoity, plunder and kidnapping perpetrated by planters.[1] He also quoted a few cases from his personal experience. One was a case of kidnapping in the Shanpore Factory: the victim had been kept imprisoned in a godown till he had died; his corpse had been carried away and sunk in a pond with bags of bricks.[2] The planters kept up a feeling of terrorism, Ashley Eden added, without which the cultivation could not be carried on for one day. Acts of violence, such as the attack of ~~the village of~~ Hatt-dayal in which three villages were gutted, three cultivators killed and six wounded, were employed to strike terror into the hearts of ryots. As soon as they began to forget, fresh violence would be applied.[3]

Years earlier, Edward De Latour, a Magistrate, told a missionary that "not a chest of indigo reached England without being stained with human blood".[4] His

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1. Report, Appendix No. 21.
2. Report, Minutes of Evidence, Q.3576.
3. Report, Minutes of Evidence, Q.3596.
4. Calcutta Christian Observer, Nov.1855, p.530; Minutes of Evidence, Q.3918.

evidence before the Commission[1] confirmed this. He said that about the end of the year 1846 he had found the hands of planters systematically lifted up against the life and property of ryots. The planters appeared to recognize the existence of neither a Magistrate on earth, nor a God in heaven. He quoted a case which illustrated the immense power wielded by these men. An attack was made on the house of a rich man, named Doodoo Meah with a force of seven or eight hundred lathials armed with guns and other weapons. His house was broken into, his servants wounded and murdered and property valued at twelve lacs of rupees was looted. The bodies of the dead were removed. Later, the darogah arrived. All that he did was to arrest the wounded men as "part of an unlawful assemblage". The Magistrate of the district did not investigate the case. Instead, he went to dine with the planter, and then committed Doodoo Meah for trial at the sessions court.[2] Doodoo Meah was subsequently acquitted.[2]

De-Latour cited another case in which the planter, accompanied by fifty or sixty boats, attacked a village.

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1. In 1860, he was a Sessions Judge.

2. Report, Minutes of Evidence, Q.3917-8.

Many villagers were killed, the planter himself taking part in the shooting. The wounded were stowed away in boats and taken to the factory. Such shots as could be picked out of their bodies were picked out; then the men were removed to places of imprisonment in the Dacca district.

"I have seen several ryots", De Latour said, "who have been speared through the body. I have had ryots before me who have been shot down ..... I have put on record .... how other have been first speared and then kidnapped. And such a system..... I consider to be a system of bloodshed". Then he added, "I charge upon the indigo planters, as far as my experience in the Fureedpore district goes, that they have grossly violated the essentials of the law".[1] ~~Further,~~ the Missionary, Bomwetsch, spoke of the kidnapping ofa village woman, noted for her beauty. Her relatives had complained in vain to the darogah, and later, to a Deputy Magistrate.[2] This, however, seems to have been an extremely rare occurrence.

The indigo planter was practically beyond the reach of the law. The village Chowkidar was less than a

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1. Ibid, Q.3918.
2. ~~Report, par. 94-96.~~ Ibid, Q.962

worm before this mighty autocrat. The evidence of Gunni Duffader before the Commission bore out the point. His father, who was a Chowkider, saw a village being set on fire, and raised an outcry. The lathials of the factory at once struck and speared both father and son, and carried them away in a senseless condition. For four months Gunni was kept imprisoned in a godown, "a dark room, in which day and night were the same".[1]

While the chowdikars were powerless to prevent the planters' tyranny, the higher police officials seem to have been corrupt. Ashley Eden said that he had reasons to suspect that in a large number of cases the police had taken bribes from planters.[2]

Nor were the Magistrates disposed to offer protectio to ryots. "The bias of the English Magistrate", the Report of the Commission says, "has been unconsciously towards his countrymen, whom he has asked to his own table, or met in the

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1. Ibid, Q.1048, 1062.

2. Ibid, Q.3615. The Commission concluded that the police as a body were "liable to the charge of venality and corruption. ..... When matters come to this, that the assistance or support of the police can be purchased, like any other article, it is quite clear that the advantage will remain with the party who has the freest hand and the fullest purse".

hunting field, or whose house he has personally visited".[1] Questioned whether he considered that Government officials had sacrificed justice to favour the planters, Ashley Eden replied in the affirmative. Further, he confessed that as a young Magistrate he himself had favoured his countrymen on several occasions.[2] De Latour, the Sessions Judge, spoke vehemently against the practice of European Magistrates intimately associating with those who had cases in their courts. This, he said, was utterly repugnant to one's sense of duty; it had destroyed the confidence of Indians in British justice, and made them loth to seek redress from those who were so obviously corrupt.[3] The appointment of planters as Honorary Magistrates sometimes removed justice further beyond the reach of the ryots.[4]

While the Magistrates were, in general, biased in favour of the planters, the working of the criminal law also

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1. Report, par. 119. See also Som Prokash, July 25, 1859.
2. Report, Minutes of Evidence, Q.3602.
3. Ibid, Q.3917.
4. The Indigo Commission said: "The appointment of unoffici Europeans as honorary magistrates is inexpedient in the present state of Bengal proper". Report, par. 187.

defeated the ends of justice. The conviction of a planter, who had the legal privileges enjoyed by British-born subjects, was in practice almost an impossibility. An oppressed peasant would rather suffer silently than undertake a long journey to Calcutta to seek justice from the Supreme Court, leaving his wife and children to the vengeance of the planter; besides, he would not find it easy to persuade his witnesses to face the risk and the trouble. To make matters worse, it was well known that the Grand Jury was not disposed to convict Europeans. Ashley Eden, in his evidence, spoke strongly on this point. He cited cases from his personal experience. He had committed a European, who had pleaded guilty before him, for trial before the Supreme Court on a charge of manslaughter; the Grand Jury had quashed the charge.[1]

If it happened that a conscientious Magistrate sought to wield justice impartially, he risked his career. Abdool Luteef, a Deputy Magistrate, was transferred from an indigo district for trying to prevent the forcible trespass of the planters into the ryots' lands.[2] Ashley Eden was censured

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1. Ibid, Q.3599. Cowell, Courts in India, p.190. See also Som Prakash, July 25, 1859.

2. Calcutta Review, 1860, vol. 34, p.358. See also Correspondence ap. Parl. Papers, 1861, XLIV, pp. 7 et seq.

by the Divisional Commissioner for telling the ryots that the cultivation of indigo was optional: the planters agitated for his removal, and he had no little difficulty in defending his position and retaining his independence as a Magistrate.[1] Men of all ranks, Ashley Eden told the Commission, "from the highest officers of the Government down to the lowest", were biased in favour of the planters.[2] He was asked by the Commission how, in such circumstances, the cultivation of indigo had continued for such a long time. He replied that the people of Bengal were by nature patient to bear oppression. Their feelings, he said, had taken the form of sullen hate, rather than active opposition. It was, besides, not easy to combat the planters who were believed to have the support of the Government.[3]

All through the fifties, the mud huts of Lower Bengal began to assume increasingly the explosive nature of barrels of gunpowder. During the latter half of the decade

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1. Report, Minutes of Evidence, Q.3608.
2. Ibid, Q.3598.
3. Ibid, Q.3607.

the prices of agricultural produce almost doubled as also the price of free labour; but the remuneration paid by the planter to the ryot remained unchanged.[1] The condition was, in some ways, similar to that of feudal serfdom. Discontent grew deeper and more wide-spread. Terrorism helped this growth rather than checked it. A spark alone was needed to ignite the accumulated gunpowder. It came in the form of an idea. Some of the missionaries and Government officials told the peasants that they were not lawfully bound to sow indigo unless they had taken out contracts for it. In the light of this idea, the peasants realized that they had been the victims of an unlawful tyranny. This new consciousness gave them the moral courage to struggle for their rights.

"It is extremely unreasonable", the Report of the Commission says, "to attribute the sudden failure of an unsound system ..... to the officials or missionaries who told the people that they were free agents".[2] True, that the newly acquired sense of rights no more produced the revolt of 1860 than the greased cartridges produced the Mutiny. But

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1. Grant, Minute, 17 Dec, 1860, ap. Parl. Papers, 1861, XLV, p.74.

2. Report, par. 130.

the one, as the other, supplied the heat which threw the explosive materials aflame. Mass upheavals take place out of the impact of ideas upon minds which have for some time been in a state of tension. It is useful to note that on this occasion the ideas came not from any Indian political party, but from missionaries and officials. There was then no Indian party prepared to champion the cause of the peasants, or even to recognise their political value as a fighting element.

The uprising was guided purely by economic motives, and no attempt was made to give it a political colouring. "There is no real evidence", the Report says, "to show that the ryots were acting at the bidding of stronger and more influential parties, or that they had combined together in villages, as they certainly did combine, under the guidance of any but the head ryots of each place, or with any ulterior political object than that of vindicating their own rights. It is quite true, however, that men of one village went to another village, keeping up the general excitement".[1]

One more quotation from the Report will be of interest. "If these ryots rejoiced in new ideas of their

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1. Ibid, par. 127. See also Minutes of Evidence, Q.3072, 2831, 2832.

position and rights, or in some cases acted under a sense of irritation, or without forethought, this was just what might have been expected from an intelligent and excitable population suddenly roused from torpor to think and act for themselves".[1]

It is uncertain whether the Mutiny had in any way helped to create the mood of revolt of the Bengal peasants. The Santal uprising of 1856, however, seems to have helped to create it. The Santals had been oppressed by money-lenders. Over and again they had appealed to the authorities for protection, but with no success. This led them to believe that the authorities were in sympathy with the oppressive money-lenders. They at last resolved to use force where protest had failed. Though defeated on the battle-field, they secured victory ultimately, for their grievances were removed.[2] It is possible that the peasants of Lower Bengal took the lesson to heart and made use of it as the only way out of an intolerable situation.

The first disturbances occurred in the Aurangabad sub-division, when the Ancoora factory was attacked by a mob. The rioters were punished. In the district of Pabna a

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1. Report, par. 129.

2. Calcutta Review, 1856, vol. 26, pp.223 et.seq.

party of military police was repulsed by a number of ryots who had assembled to resist the cultivation of indigo. Troops were rushed to the districts where excitement prevailed [1]

The Manager of the Sindoori concern wrote on February 21 that the ryots were daily trying to burn the factory and godowns. Most of the factory servants had left. It was difficult to get food from the bazar. The whole country was in revolt, and if it went on much longer, there was no knowing what might happen. The Manager of the Carryode Factory wrote on March 1 that the whole district was "in revolution", the ryots having firmly resolved not to sow indigo.

Campbell, an assistant in the Mulnath Concern, was attacked and beaten. Hyde, a planter in the same Concern, was pelted with clods and saved himself only by the speed of his horse. The outhouses of the Goldar Concern at Chandpore and the factory houses of Kadjoorah belonging to the Lokenathpore Concern were burnt down. Three hundred men attacked a house in Malda and made a bonfire of it. Two

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1. Buckland, Bengal under the Lieutenant-governors, vol. 1, p.188.

other factories were destroyed by fire in the Rajsahi district. Village after village refused to pay their rent. The lands of planters were seized. Through the districts of Nadia and Pabna, Rajsahi and Murshidabad, Jessore and Malda, spread the fire of revolt, resulting in the bankruptcy of many planters and the flight, ruin and imprisonment of thousands of peasants.[1]

Retaliation was swift and certain. Troops were located in places where no soldier had been required for a century. Gun-boats cruised on rivers which had never before borne warlike craft. Clashes occurred in which men were killed and wounded.[2]

A sudden and remarkable change had come, the Calcutta Review wrote, over the rural population of Bengal. The ryots who used to be classed with Russian serfs, who used to be regarded as "part and parcel" of Zemindars and planters, had at last resolved to break their chains. They had risen in open rebellion against their masters, "as if under the influence of some sudden inspiration".[3]

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1. Calcutta Review, 1861, vol. 36, pp.22-3.
2. Ibid, p.28.
3. Ibid, 1860, vol. 34, pp.355,240.

It is interesting to note how the peasants of Bengal organized themselves. Having realized in course of the slow, bitter struggle the value of united action, they stood in the moment of crisis on the rock of solidarity, and formed "combinations", of which the leadership was vested in committees. Hundreds of men, armed with spears and bamboos, would assemble at once on some signal such as the beat of a drum.[1]

In the autumn of 1860 the situation was full of danger. "For about a week it caused me more anxiety than I have had since the days of Delhi", Canning wrote. "I felt that a shot fired in anger or fear by one foolish planter might put every factory in Lower Bengal in flames".[2] The Minute of J.P. Grant, dated September 17, 1860, contains material of considerable interest. The Lieutenant-Governor wrote that as he sailed on the rivers, Kumar and Kaliganga, he saw their banks lined with crowds of villagers claiming justice. Even the village women had gathered in groups. The suppliants for justice, tens of thousands of them, formed a double street for sixty or seventy miles. "It would be

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1. Ibid, 1861, vol. 36, pp.312, 352

2. Buckland, op. cit., pp.191-2.

folly", Grant stated, "to suppose that such a display.... has no deep meaning. The organization and capacity for combined and simultaneous action in the cause, which this remarkable demonstration over so large an extent of country proved, are subjects worthy of much consideration".[1]

Meanwhile, a new Contract Law had been passed. In March, 1860, a deputation from the Indigo Planters' Association interviewed the Lieutenant-Governor and laid a petition before him. On behalf of the indigo interests the Association asked for two things: that the Government should take steps to remove the mistaken impression existing in the minds of ryots that it was opposed to indigo planting; and that a special law should be enacted to make the breach of an indigo contract punishable summarily by a Magistrate.[2]

Grant at once acceded to the first prayer. A Notification was issued on March 14 impressing upon the ryots the necessity of fulfilling existing contracts.[3] The second prayer involved questions of a serious nature: on the one

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1. Grant, Minute, 17 September 1860, ap. Parl. Papers, 1861, XLV, pp.27-30.

2. Petition ap. Parl Papers, 1861, XLIV, pp.196-8.

3. Notification ap. Parl Papers ut supra, p.199.

hand, there was the fact that laws already existed for the redress of grievances arising from breach of contract; on the other, the planters were threatened by a great calamity, owing to the combined refusal of the ryots to sow indigo. Grant came to the conclusion that the existing legal procedure was inadequate, and a special law was temporarily required to tide over the crisis.[1] So a Bill was introduced into the Legislative Council and passed on March 31 as Act XI of 1860. It was an Act "to enforce the fulfilment of indigo contracts and to provide for the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry".[2]

The necessity of such an Act had been discussed long before 1860. In 1811 Lord Minto's Government had declared that it did not see any reason why the remedy already open to the indigo manufacturer of filing a suit in the Civil Court for breach of contract should be turned into one of criminal prosecution. A special law in favour of the planters was, however, passed in 1830 in response to their demand.[3] By Sections two and three of this

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1. Bengal Govt. letter, 23 March 1860, ap. Parl. Papers up supra, pp.201-2.

2. Proceedings of the Legislative Council of India, 1860, 289 et. seq.

3. Grant, Minute, par. 11,13.

Regulation V of the Bengal Code, persons who contracted for the cultivation of the indigo plant and then did not keep their engagements were held guilty of "misdemeanour", as also were those who induced the breach of contract. This law was held by the Home Government to be unjust and oppressive, and it was ordered to be rescinded. After much discussion it was repealed in August 1835, by Act XVI of that year.[1] A few months later, Act X of 1836 was passed, expressly giving the planter a civil remedy for breaches of contract on the part of the ryot.[2]

The new Act of 1860 provided that ryots who had broken indigo contracts might be imprisoned, and that damages might be levied on their property. By section V of that Act any person instigating the ryot to break his engagement would be liable to imprisonment, or fine, or both. Section VII provided that no appeal could be made against the decision of a Magistrate.[3]

On receiving the Act, Sir Charles Wood wrote that it was "open to serious objection". But since it was

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1. Grant, Minute, par. 15. See also Theobald, Legislative Acts of the Governor-General in Council, vol. I, pp.12,21.

2. &c.

3. Ibid, vol. III, p.346.

already in force, and was designed to tide over a crisis, he did not disallow it.[1]

The law was viewed with disapproval by many members of the House of Commons. Kinnaird strongly protested against it. He regretted that no official reports were available regarding an Act of such importance. The serious nature of the disturbances in the indigo districts, he said, would be best understood from the measures adopted to repress them. Large bodies of the police were pouring into these districts, and the Legislature had been hastily called upon to pass a Bill which would render the breach of a civil contract a criminal offence. The House was probably not aware, Kinnaird continued, of the oppressive system by which the ryots were compelled to cultivate indigo. They were forced to grow it, though it would pay them much better to grow rice. For a long time they had remonstrated in vain. When at last they had tried to resist oppression, they were met by the new Act. It was as if an English landlord was invested with the right to

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1. West, Sir Charles Wood's administration of Indian affairs, pp.44-5.

punish a tenant for default of rent as a criminal offender. If such a thing was attempted by Napoleon in Algiers or by the Emperor in Russia, the press would denounce him for tyranny and oppression.[1]

Vansittart argued on the same line. The tyranny of the planters had been proved, he said, by the evidence before the Colonization Committee of which he had been a member.[2] The planters inserted arbitrary clauses in the cabooBat (contract-deed), by which they reserved to themselves the power of sending their own people to the fields to weed, reap and cart the indigo plant. In consequence, however favourable the season might be and however abundant the crop, the ryots could not fulfil their engagements, since the planter, by producing a statement of the expenses incurred in weeding, reaping and carting, kept them in his books as defaulters. In India a ryot had told him that, do what he would, he could not reduce the debt incurred by his father twenty-three years previously. The more industrious the ryot was, and the better he cultivated, the greater was the effort of the planter to keep him on his books as a defaulter.

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1. Hansard, 1860, vol. 158, 695-6.

2. See Report of the Select Committee on colonization (India) ap. Parl. Papers, 1859, IV, pp.329-30.

The new Contract Law had roused a feeling of deep exasperation among the cultivators. The gaols would probably be inadequate to hold them all.[1]

The gaols, indeed, filled up in no time. The number of cases under the new Act increased so much that the regular work of the Courts was choked, and special Magistrates had to be employed.[2] In a single gaol in Nuddea there were at one time no less than 588 prisoners convicted under this Act.[3] They went to prison undefended. The impoverished ryots could not engage lawyers. Besides, lawyers found it dangerous to undertake to defend them. Some inhabitants of Calcutta, moved by the spectacle of suffering, employed an Indian lawyer to go and defend the ryots ofone village. But the District Magistrate, taking advantage of a clause in the Act which made any one aiding or abetting the violation of indigo contracts liable to a fine and six months' imprisonment, condemned the lawyer to that sentence. After this the ryots could get no legal assistance, and the prosecutors had their own way.[4]

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1. Hansard, ut supra, 697-9.
2. Buckland, op. cit., p.189.
3. Hansard, 1861, vol. 162, 807-8.
4. Ibid, 809. See also Report, Minutes of Evidence, Q.3878.

The resisting ryots were thrown into prison, while their houses, cattle and other property, including even their ploughs, were sold. Their wives and children became homeless beggars, without food, clothing and shelter. Then the Government offered the convicts immediate release and restoration of property on condition that they cultivated indigo according to their contracts. This offer they scornfully refused, declaring that "they would die a thousand deaths rather than cultivate indigo again".[1] Nothing, indeed, could reveal more glaringly the hatred of the ryots for a system which had been holding them like an octopus. That hatred revealed itself also in the evidence they gave before the Commission. Ranju Mulla was asked: "Would not it have been better for you to sow this year, instead of going to prison? He replied: "No, I would rather be killed with bullets and have my throat cut, than sow indigo".[2]

The Contract Law was ruthlessly enforced. It might be urged that a contract was after all a contract, and, the ryot, having made it, ought to keep it: breach of contract was, indeed, a civil offence, but owing to the exigencies of

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1. Calcutta Review, 1860, vol. 34, p.376.

2. Report, Minutes of Evidence, Q.3214; see also Q.1165.

the time and the wave of passive resistance which was sweeping the villages, it had to be made a criminal one. But this point of view is hard to defend, for the contracts which were made were nearly all condemnable on moral grounds, and a good number of them would have vanished under real scrutiny. First, contracts were often thrust upon unwilling ryots. If persuasion failed, a term of imprisonment in a dark godown was likely to be employed. If simple imprisonment failed, there were more effective methods of coercion. When a terrorised ryot gave way and signed a contract, for the rest of his life he would be chained to the factory. He would never be able to pay off the advance made over to him. The debt would descend from father to son. An indigo contract was a deadly trap, never loosening its grip until its victim died, and, then, only to draw into its jaws his son or some other successor.

Besides, hundreds of contracts were found to be forged documents. In one case, for example, which was cited in the House of Commons, a ryot bound himself and his heirs never to pay back his advance in money or in any other way than by continuing to cultivate indigo. The contract was a forgery. The ryot, however, was thrown into prison upon the strength of this document purporting to bind himself and his

heirs to impoverishment by a profitless cultivation of the planters' land. Contracts were produced in the Courts and declared to have been entered into by men who, at the time alleged, were bed-ridden, blind or dead. In the district of Nudea alone, out of 609 contracts put into the Magistrate's Court to support prosecution under the Summary Act, no less than forty-three bore forged endorsements, and ten of these cases were decided against the ryots without proper inquiry. Cases were hastily tried. One Magistrate disposed of seventy-nine of them in four days.[1]

The Summary Act was indeed a great blunder. James Long described it as a slave law, and the working of it as an attempt to sow indigo at the point of the bayonet. But it did not serve its purpose. Coercion could not alleviate the crisis. It only left a legacy of hate. The ryots had developed the tactics of passive resistance, broken now and then by outbursts of violence. Threats of imprisonment failed to make them sow the indigo seed. One solution alone was possible: to offer a higher price for the indigo plant. This was done at the end of a bitter struggle. For many years, however, the air of Bengal villages remained surcharged

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1. Letter from J.S. Bell to the Govt. of Bengal, 3 Nov.1860, and from E.H. Lushington, 14 Jan. 1861, ap. Parl. Papers, 1861, XLV, pp.38-9,181-2. India Office despatch, 18 April 1861, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, p.199. See also Hansard, 1861, vol. 162, 807-9,820.

with dangerous fumes of anger and hatred.[1]

The Summary Act expired on the 4th of October, 1860. A new Bill, similar to the defunct one, was introduced into the Legislative Council of India by Cecil Beadon on March 2 of the following year.[2] It was strongly opposed by J.P. Grant; yet the Government which had promised him "cordial support" ignored his warning and determined to pass the measure.[3] This was all the more unfortunate in view of the fact that the Government of India had, at the end of September 1860, authorized the issue of a Notification announcing that the Summary Act would not be renewed.[4] The Indigo Commission had also expressed its disapproval of such a measure.[5]

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1. Campbell, Memoirs, vol. II, pp.104-7, 294.

2. Proceedings of the Legislative Council of India, 1861, 84 seq. See also Som Prakash, March 11 and March 25, 1861.

3. Calcutta Review, 1861, vol. 36, p.294. See also Govt. of India letter to the Govt. of Bengal, 27 Feb. 1861, ap. Parl. Papers, pp.194 et. seq.

4. Notification, 22 Sept. 1860, ap. Parl. Papers ut supra p.51.

5. Report, par. 178.

A prolonged debate took place again in the House of Commons on the Indigo question. Kinnaird said that the Bill was contrary to promises made to the ryots, and, if passed, it would sanction the greatest injustice, endangering the peace of Bengal. He added that the apathy of the members of the House had emboldened the planters to put pressure upon the Government of India, who had not the firmness and moral courage necessary to resist it.[1] Layard also spoke at length, reviewing the whole situation and quoting copiously from the Commission's Report.[2]

Sir Charles Wood admitted that Bengal was suffering from forced labour and oppression. He had sanctioned the Summary Act, he said, owing to the sudden outbreak of revolt. But he had already sent a despatch and was sending a second one, expressing his desire that the Bill should be immediately withdrawn.[3]

In his despatch to the Governor-General, dated 18 April, 1861, Sir Charles Wood wrote: "The deliberate judgment . . . . of the Indian Law Commissioners, of the

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1. Hansard, 1861, vol. 162, 816.
2. Ibid, 802 et seq.
3. Ibid, 818-21.

Legislative Council, of the Secretary of State in Council, of the majority of the Indigo Commissioners, of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, and even as it appears to me, of your own Government has been recorded against any such measure. I am not prepared to give my sanction to the law which you propose".[1]

This action on the part of the Home authorities gave rise to complaints in India. But if the Secretary of State had permitted the Bill to pass and then refused to sanction it, the Government of India would have felt much more embarrassed. On the other hand, if he had refrained altogether from interference, the interests of the ryots would have been sacrificed to the unreasonable demands of the planters. The withdrawal of the Breach of Contracts Bill, however, did not put an end to the furious struggle between the two classes. The planters, knowing well that the ryots would not sow indigo to their own loss, and fearing to resort to oppression as before, found a new method of compulsion. Availing themselves of their position as lessees

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1. India Office despatch, 18 April 1861, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, p.201. A detailed account of the indigo crisis was published in the Som Prokash on 15 April, 1861.

or owners of the land, they ~~informed~~ told their ryots that if they ~~desired~~ declined to sow indigo their rents would be raised. ~~The question involved in this dispute was~~ But to what extent ~~did~~ have the planters the power to raise rents? The decision lay with the courts of justice. In a case between Hills, a great planter, and Ishvar Ghose, the District Judge decided that rents could be raised only in proportion to the increase in the value of the produce. On appeal to the High Court this decision was reversed by the Chief Justice and two other judges. When a similar action was brought again, the case was tried by the Full Bench on account of the important principle involved, and all the judges, excepting the Chief Justice, pronounced against the power of the planter to raise rents indefinitely.[1]

The sequel to the indigo disturbances was the publication of a play called Nildarpan. It was published at Dacca anonymously, and was produced in that town. Its author was Dinabandhu Mitra, one among the group of young and talented writers who had just started to build up a new prose literature in Bengal.

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1. West, op. cit., pp.55-9.

Dinabandhu Mitra was educated at the Hoogli College and the Hindu College, studying English literature with great interest. Early in his youth he came under the influence of the poet and journalist, Isvar Chandra Gupta. He accepted Government service in 1855 in the postal department. In course of his tours through the country as an Inspecting Postmaster, he learnt of the indigo planters' oppression. He collected reliable information and used it as material for his play. The Nildarpan was poor in dramatic technique; but its naked realism, its scenes of blood and torture, awakened sympathy for the oppressed and indignation against the oppressors.[1]

Apart from its literary value, the Nildarpan is of interest to the historian as the centre of a storm which swept a well-known missionary into prison, and nearly brought censure upon the head of a Secretary of the Bengal Government. Within a few months of its publication, James Long of the Church Missionary Society issued an English version of it, adding a preface which indicted the planters and charged two English newspapers of Calcutta with corruption. James Long had been working in India since 1846, specially in the field of social reform, and was very popular among Indians. When the indigo

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1. Guha-Thakurta, Bengali Drama, pp.107-110.

disturbances started, he wrote against the tyranny which was responsible for them. Replying to the statement of Calcutta journals that peace and order had been brought back into the indigo districts, he had said that it was a peace procured by the stock and the dungeon. He had declared that the Magistrates could not be so ungrateful for the good cheer they enjoyed in the planters' houses as to give a decision in favour of the ryots: and that they were afraid to expose themselves to the thunder of the Calcutta press. A reign of terror, he had said, existed in certain districts. Planters made use of Black Holes. The Indigo Commission would fail to elicit the whole truth, since evidence on the part of a ryot against an "indigo sahib" would endanger the ryot's life and his daughter's honour. The systematic use of terror was rapidly drilling the ryots into silence.[1]

The Bengal Hurkaru replied to this statement with no little vituperation. Meanwhile, the English version of the Nildarpan had appeared, and nearly three hundred copies of it had been sent to the editors of London newspapers, the secretaries of religious, philanthropic and political

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1. Calcutta Review, 1861, vol. 36, p.362.

societies in England, and to influential members of Parliament. Among its recipients were Bright, Disraeli, Gladstone, Kinnaird, Dickinson, Layard, Hodgson Pratt, Shaftesbury and Ripon.[1] The book had gone under the seal of the Bengal Government, owing to the inadvertence of the Secretary, Seton-Kerr. He had acted in this matter without the knowledge of the Lieutenant-Governor. When charged with the offence of circulating a libellous work, he explained in a statement to the press and also in his letter to the Bengal Government, dated July 29, 1861, that he regarded the Nildarpan as an expression of the feeling of Indians on an important subject. He said that from timeimmemorial Hindus had been expressing their feelings on social questions through the medium of the drama. Little was known to the authorities and to Europeans in general of the undercurrents of Indian society. Even men of great experience had lamented their inability to penetrate into the recesses of the Indian mind. The Government had been blamed, before and after the Mutiny, for paying no heed to vernacular publications which were the mirrors of popular feeling. These considerations had led him, Seton-Karr declared, to circulate the book under the official seal. He confessed his mistake in not

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1. Long, Trial, p.15.

having examined it carefully before circulation. For this he submitted an apology which was accepted by the Governor-General in Council. But Seton-Karr was removed from the Secretaryship.[1] Subsequently, after holding some other posts, he became a High Court Judge.

There was, however, no escape for James Long. He was charged with libel against the Englishman and the Bengal Harkaru, and also against the community of the indigo planters The prosecution was launched at the instance of the Land-holders' and Commercial Association of British India. The famous trial created a great sensation and evoked expressions of sympathy. A number of well-known Indians, including Raja Radha Kant and Satyendra Nath Tagore drew up an Address for presentation to Long. They said that in the existing constitution of the British Indian Government, it was extremely important to consult Indian opinions, whatever be the medium through which ~~they were~~ it was expressed. The part that James Long had taken in the Nildarpan affair had been due to his belief in the necessity of enlightening the European mind on the contents of the vernacular press. The memorialists finally said: "That the Nil Durpan is a genuine expression of Native feeling on the subject of Indigo planting we

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1. Ibid, pp.21-24, 26-29. See also Som Prokash, August 19, 1861.

can with confidence certify". A second Address was subsequently presented, signed by 3,000 Indians.[1]

James Long declared in a statement that it would be useful for Europeans of all classes to see themselves in the mirror of the Indian press. Lord William Bentinck used to think so: he used to regard the criticism of his administration "as an index and safety valve for the public mind". But the mutterings of the native press before the mutiny were neglected, and "men slept quietly over the brink of a volcano".[2] Addressing the Court during the trial, Long expressed the same views. At the time of the appearance of the Nildarpan, he said, the indigo question had been assuming a threatening aspect. It was necessary for men of influence to know that the wound was not a surface one, and that it required deep probing. Four years earlier, Calcutta had been tremblingly awaiting the result of the mutiny. Many had felt then how unsafe it was for the English to live in India in ignorance of the currents of native feeling. Long continued that if, before the mutiny, he had been able to submit to influential men a

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1. J. Long, Strike, but Hear! pp.88-9. "Only a few of the atrocities which the ryots have suffered for years", Som Prokash wrote, "have been revealed in the Nildarpan. Cases of oppression far more terrible have never been made public". Som Prokash, Sept. 9, 1861.

2. Long, Statement, pp.8,11.

drama throwing light on the minds of the sepoys and Indian Chiefs, it would have been valuable work, though it might have severely censured the mal-treatment of Indians by Europeans. Such a drama might even have helped to save millions of rupees and torrents of human blood.[1]

The jury found Long guilty of libel. He was sentenced to one month's imprisonment and a fine of one thousand rupees. The fine was at once paid by an eminent Indian writer, Kali Prasama Sinha; there were other Indians in the court anxious to render that service to the defendant.[2] Six days after, on July 30, the Calcutta Missionary Conference held a special meeting with Alexander Duff in the Chair, and passed a resolution expressing sympathy with Long.[3]

On August 26 a public meeting of several thousands of Indians was held in Calcutta to protest against the anti-Indian bias exhibited by Sir Mordaunt Wells, who had presided over Long's trial. Wells was charged with making sweeping remarks such as Indians had an "utter disregard of truth" and "a strong propensity to fraud". He was also indicted for referring to the Address presented to Long in the following

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1. Long, Trial, p.20.
2. Long, Strike, but hear, p.94.
3. Ibid, pp.96-7.

terms: "The Native gentlemen who have presented this address to Mr. Long ought to blush for themselves: I blush for them. Mr. Long ought to have torn it into pieces when he received it and scattered it to the winds". A petition was adopted by the meeting for transmission to the Secretary of State. It was signed by nearly 21,000 Indians.[1]

Though the Zemindars of Bengal protested against the trial of Long, and against the planters' oppression, they were not entirely free from blame for the working of the indigo system. To get rid of the worries of managing their estates, many landlords had made them over to the planters under long-term contracts. And they had made the planters pay heavily, so that the planters, in their turn, exploited the peasants as ruthlessly as possible in order to re-imburse their capital investments. Without the Zemindar's co-operation the indigo system could never have been maintained.

The indigo crisis gave a new impetus to the development of Indian political sentiments. It widened the chasm dividing the foreign from the native race. Educated Indians had noted that the scales of justice had trembled in the hands of the Government of India, and the Home authorities

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1. Memorial of the inhabitants of Calcutta, August 26,1861, pp.3,8,10. See also Pratt, Bengal planters and ryots, pp.20-1.

had intervened to redress the balance. On the whole, Government had acted with impartiality and prudence. But this did not stem the feeling of hatred and bitterness with which educated Indians looked upon the planters whose rapacity had cost ryots blood and tears. Not that all educated Indians were moved to fury by the planters' conduct. The British Indian Association cautiously steered a middle course, and its sympathy for the oppressed ryots was hardly more than lukewarm.[1] When, at the height of the indigo crisis, it secured control of the Hindoo Patriot, that journal which, under Harish Mukherji and Girish Ghose, had been a fearless advocate of the peasants' rights, decidedly changed its tone. The ryots realized this. "Harish is dead and Girish is dead, and Long hasbeen sent to jail", the mournful refrain went from village to village.

But the Zemindars of the British Indian Association were already ceasing to be the political leaders of the country. They were a class doomed to be isolated from the wider community of Indians and to stagnate. Upon their static minds the indigo crisis left a faint impress. It was

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1. Som Prokash commented sarcastically on the friendly relations between the Zemindars and the planters. See Som Prokash, March 4, 1861.

the middle class, vital, determined and progressive, that was psychologically affected by the crisis. Not that the middle class had any intention, at this time, of using rural discontents for a political purpose. That idea came much later. But this class, indignantly conscious of the slowness with which its rising importance was recognised, was prepared to defend the rights of fellow-sufferers and to denounce tyranny.

CHAPTER IV

STRUGGLE FOR SOCIAL REFORM.

The first battle between the orthodox Hindus, who were resolved to maintain all their religious customs, and the progressives, who were equally resolved to bring about changes, was fought on the question of suttee.[1] The battle was decisive. The Dharma Sabha never recovered from its defeat. By the middle of the century, suttee, even if approved by some pundits, could no longer count on the support of any organised party. So it passed out finally from the programme of social reform.

Another time-honoured and revolting custom was the charak or hook-swinging festival. Bishop Heber and his wife have left an account of this ceremony as they saw it in 1824. Poles were erected. The victim - a voluntary one - was led, covered with flowers, to the foot of a pole. Hooks were thrust through the muscles of his sides, and a broad bandage was fastened round his waist "to prevent the hooks being torn through by the weight of his body". He was then raised up and whirled round. At first the motion was slow,

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1. See Thompson, Suttee.

then it became rapid. In a few minutes it ceased. The bystanders were going to let him down, when he made signs that he would once more swing, at which the crowd applauded loudly.

Devotees went about, the Bishop and his wife observed, with needles through their tongues and arms, and hot irons pressed against their sides. Their faces expresse resigned and patient suffering. Opium was generally taken by these poor wretches to deaden their feeling: and the parts through which the needles were pierced used to be previously rubbed for a considerable time to bring about numbness.[1]

Nor was the custom confined to men. Sometimes even women, frantic with superstition and drugs, swung with hooks in their backs amidst the shouts of an excited crowd.[2]

There were many other ways of self-torture. Devotees cast themselves on thorns and upraised knives. They pierced their arms with iron arrows, drew strings through the flesh of their sides and fixed on their body spikes which were heated continually in a burning fire.

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1. Heber, Narrative of a journey, vol. I, pp.76-8. Duff, India and India Missions, pp.244-7.

2. Marshman, Life and Times, vol. I, p.182.

The practice of votaries cutting out their tongues and offering them to a temple goddess was by no means uncommon in the earlier years of the last century. It took place, for instance, at Kalighat near Calcutta.[1] The missionary Ward noted this as also several other forms of self-immolation. He saw a mendicant, one among numerous others, who had held up their left arms for years till they could no longer be moved. He also saw in a suburb of Calcutta a number of men who surrounded themselves with scorching fires, and for three or four hours every day rested in front of the flames on their shoulders with their legs in the air.[2]

Two different motives lay behind the practice of self-immolation. One was the desire to rouse pity and get alms. This seems to have been the only motive of hook-swinging, which was customary with none but poor men of low caste. But the other forms of self-torture were designed to win divine grace by scourging the flesh. The greater the suffering, the lesser the burden of sin. Since the

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1. Ward, History . . . of the Hindoos, vol. II, p.50, foot note.
Dubois, Character, Manners and Customs of the people of India (1862) pp.303-4.

2. Ward, op. cit., vol. II, pp.198,45. See also J.J. Pool, Land of Idols, pp.34-6, and M. Williams, Modern India, pp.53-4.
P.N. Bose, History of Hindu Civilisation, vol. I, p.75.

sufferings that came naturally in the course of life were not enough, they had to be intensified by/natural means.

In 1831 the progressives, educated in the Hindu College, denounced the charak festival. The Reformer, which expressed their view, pleaded for suppression by the authorities. This is interesting in view of the fact that the battle against suttee was not yet over, and the attitude of the Government towards Indian social questions was an incalculable factor. The priest of a kali temple wrote a letter to the Samarchar Durpan, the Serampore journal, regretting that the progressives should ask for the interference of the Government in a religious matter. The question ought to be settled, he said, by the Hindu community itself.[1]

Two years later, the Samarchar Chandrika, the organ of orthodox Hindus, noted with pleasure that the Government had paid no heed to the request of the reformers for the suppression of charak. That festival had taken place as in previous years. It was unthinkable, the paper said, that the authorities should suppress a custom of such long standing.[2]

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1. Samarchar Durpan, April 30, 1831, qp. S.N. Banerji, Sambadpatre Sekaler Katha, vol. II, pp.373-4.

2. Samarchar Chandrika, April 20, 1833, qp. B.N. Banerji, op. cit., pp.376-7.

In April, 1837, the Bengal Herald commented that the practice of Charak was extremely hateful, and cited a case of death which had occurred a few days previously. A young devotee was spinning round the pole. Suddenly the rope that held him gave way, and the man was flung violently to a distance of thirty yards. All that was left of him was a mass of dead flesh.[1]

In 1856 the Court of Directors suggested to the Government of India that measures should be devised for suppressing the cruelties of the Charak ceremony. An official inquiry was started; but before the report was prepared the Directors wrote again saying that the practice should be suppressed by influence rather than by formal prohibition. At the same time the Calcutta Missionary Conference sent a memorial to the Government asking for complete suppression.

After careful deliberation Sir Frederick Halliday decided that as the ceremony was one of pain voluntarily undergone, the remedy must be left to the missionary and the school-master; and that, as advised by the Directors, the cruelties should be discouraged by influence rather than by authority.[2]

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1. Bengal Herald, April 22,1837, ap. B.N. Banerji, op. cit, p.378.

2. Buckland, Bengal under the Lieutenant-Governors, vol. I, pp.31-2.

On May 18, 1859, the Sambad Purnachandrodaya, the organ of a moderate group of Hindus, described the cruelties which accompanied the charak festival, and expressed its hatred of them. It said that Mr. Elliott, who had acted with ability as the Chief Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta, had attempted to suppress the barbarous practice, and would have succeeded if he had remained in his post for a further period. There was a welcome rumour that Lord Stanley, the Secretary of State, had raised the question in Parliament; and that, with its consent, he had sent out an order to the Government of India requesting it to suppress hook-swinging, if the Hindus approved of such a measure.[1]

When J.P. Grant succeeded Halliday, the Calcutta Missionary Conference again petitioned the Legislative Council to prohibit the charak ceremony. The petition was forwarded to the Secretary of State. His Majesty's Government decided that every opportunity should be taken to discourage the practice; it suggested the propriety of inserting in all leases of Government lands a provision against the festival; of enlisting for the same purpose the

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1. Sambad Purnachandrodaya, May 18, 1859, ap. B.N. Banerji, op. cit., pp.377-8.

sympathy of the leading members of the community: and of quietly makingknown its disapproval of the ceremony. Grant requested the Commissioners of Divisions to furnish reports on the subject. From these it appeared that hook-swinging was confined to Bengal proper and Orissa. Where this practice existed as a time-honoured custom, the local authorities were asked to secure its removal through personal influence and the co-operation of the Zemindars. But in the districts in which it was of recent growth, the Magistrates were directed to prohibit the ceremony and prevent it if necessary by the use of the police. The reports showed that the practice was definitely declining.[1]

In 1864, when Cecil Beadon was the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, the subject came up again. This time the Government had no reason to hesitate. The memories of the Sepoy Mutiny were fading: the indigo troubles had passed. After consulting the British Indian Association and receiving its opinion that all cruel practices should be suppressed so long as religious observances were not interfered with, Cecil Beadon issued a Resolution of which these are the main points:- The cruelties of the Charak

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1. Buckland, op. cit., p.177.

festival had been either voluntarily discontinued or suppressed by the authorities in most parts of India. They still prevailed, however, in many districts of Bengal. The practice of such cruelties was revolting. They presented a demoralizing public spectacle and tended to keep alive among the people a feeling ofindifferance to the sufferings of their fellow-men. They had long been discouraged by the Government and by the enlightened section of the Indian community. An influential body of Hindus had lately approved of their suppression. A Hindu member of the Lieutenant-Governor's Council had suggested the passing of a bill for that purpose. The measures hitherto adopted to suppress hook-swinging had been largely ineffective: therefore, in accordance with the instructions given in an India Office despatch dated February 24, 1859, stronger steps would be taken. The Lieutenant-Governor was supported in this matter not only by a sense of duty, but by an expression of the opinion of the leading members of the Hindu community.

All District Magistrates were accordingly directed to prevent hook-swinging, and to secure the co-operation of influential Zemindars and other Indians for that purpose.[1]

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1. Ibid, pp.312-3.

The Charak festival was abolished. A few years later, however, cases of hook-swinging were reported from the Dacca district. The men concerned were punished. The Magistrate of Dacca was instructed to republish regularly a month before the beginning of the Charak festival, a notice of warning against the practice.[1]

A comment which appeared on April, 1866, in the editorial columns of the Sambad Provakar - a Bengali journal which was extremely moderate and cautious in its tone - may be quoted. The charak ceremony, it said, had spread in the country at a time when ignorance prevailed, and had never received the sanction of the Hindu religion. The untouchables tortured themselves in a drunken condition by pricking their bodies all over with needles, piercing their arms and tongues with iron arrows, and making streams of blood out. While suffering this bodily pain they marched along the streets in procession under a blazing sun, dancing to the beat of drums. Such a barbarous spectacle gave the onlooker a creepy sensation of horror. Only ignorant men, mad with drugs, do such inhuman acts, which all men of culture should try to suppress. Worse still was the practice

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1. Ibid, p.438.

of hook-swinging . . . . It was a wonder that the self-torturers did not die in the attempt.[1]

The charak festival was suppressed, but many forms of self-torture prevail even today; for the motives which gave them birth have not weakened: no town in India is without its beggars, who try to open the hand of charity by torturing themselves: and religious superstitions still dominate the hearts of men, driving them upon strange and stormy paths which a devotee must travel, that he may win divine grace.

Self-torture, however abominable, never touched more than a tiny fraction of the vast web of Indian life. Another custom prevailed in Hindu society, operating on a tremendous scale and ruining millions of lives: it was the terrible widowhood ruthlessly enforced upon all women whose husbands had died.

Among the Aryans in India women had a high status. Husband and wife were joint rulers of the household. A maiden could choose her own husband. Suttee was unknown. But a thousand years later the puranas reveal a totally different social structure. The status of women was low.

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1. Sambad Pravakar, April 9, 1866.

Child-marriage was common. The widow was to follow her husband into the funeral pyre, or else was doomed to a life of bitter privation, and no significant changes took place in the social ideas of the Hindus up to the closing decades of the eighteenth century. It is said that the powerful Raja Ballabh of Vikrampur tried to introduce the re-marriage of widows. He secured favourable opinions from the pundits of many parts of the country, but the opposition of the pundits of Nuddea, the citadel of orthodoxy, defeated his efforts. Early in the nineteenth century a Mahratta Brahmin of Nagpore started a movement to educate public opinion on the subject but he had no success. About the same time a Madrasi Brahmin tried to get a law passed permitting the re-marriage of widows, but failed. Moti Lal Seal, a Calcutta millionaire, made strenuous attempts to bring about the same reform; it is said that he even promised a gift of ten thousand rupees to the first man who would marry a widow, and was prepared to spend his fortune in furthering the cause, but without success.[1]

Ram Mohan Roy took up the struggle for the reform, but death struck him suddenly before he could ease the lot

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1. S.C. Mitra, Vidyasagar, pp.272-3.

of those whom he had saved from the flames of the pyre.[1] Then the young reformers ofthe Hindu College threw their restless energy into this heart-breaking task.[2] But the heavy hand of tradition did not relax its merciless grip.

Hinduism was almost unaffected by attacks from without. The beef-eating reformers might bombard its walls as best they could, but the tumult of attack and its fury led to no tangible results. It was only when Hinduism was assailed from within that a real conflict arose: and the man who began this task , at first single-handed, was probably the greatest pundit of the time. He was the Principal of the Sanskrit College, and held the coveted title of Vidyasagar, Ocean of Learning.

"It is true that I do feel compassion for our miserable widows", Vidyasagar wrote, "but I did not take up my pen before I was fully convinced that the Sastras explicitly sanction their remarriage".[3] This was the key-note of the powerful agitation which he started. He was

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1. Chamatkar Mohan, August 28, 1868.

2. Gyananveshan, April 29, 1837, ap. B.N. Banerji, op. cit, p.71. A remarkable letter appeared in Samarchar Darpan on March 14, 1835 written by a Hindu woman who prayed that Government should establish by law the re-marriage of widows. See B.N. Banerji, op. cit., pp.186-7.

3. Vidyasagar, Marriage of Hindu widows, Preface, p.i.

out to baffle the orthodox pandits with their own weapons.

Widow-celibacy was, till then, regarded as a strict religious obligation. Vidyasagar admitted that re-marriage was opposed to established custom; but he pleaded that custom, however well-established, could be over-ruled by the sacred texts. Besides, it was reasonable to abandon an existing custom which was unjust, and go back to an older and better one. Orthodox Hinduism drew largely from the puranas. The Vedas, however, represented a higher Aryan civilisation which, later, had submitted to compromises with the lower type. The new proposal was to substitute the more ancient law for a later corruption.[1]

Vidyasagar published his views in a pamphlet. Strictly adhering to Hindu dialectic, he showed that the Law offered the Hindu widow no less than three alternatives: to committee suttee; to lead a life of celibacy; or to re-marry. The first had been abolished by the Government. The widow had to choose between the other two. By an overwhelming weight of sacred texts Vidyasagar proved that the alternative of re-marriage had been distinctly provided for and largely employed. The children of such marriages

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1. Hunter, Hindu Child-Widow, pp.15 et. seq.

had always been recognized as legitimate.[1]

This juristic method of dealing with the question succeeded where the purely logical method of the reformers failed. The reformers declared that enforced widowhood was an abominable relic of that unimaginative indifference which, for centuries, had characterized Asiatic life. They appealed not to the shastras, but to the principles of justice and humanity.[2] This line of agitation was taken up, later, by the able Parsee journalist Behramji Malabari, who edited the Indian Spectator.[3] But this argument left the masses of the people unconvinced. They were unmoved by the fact that enforced widowhood was cruel: for, was not the suffering of the victim the inevitable outcome of sins committed in a past life, - the chastening fire which would bring her joy in the life to come? Besides, was it not true that the principles of justice and humanity were by no means eternal, but became modified from time to time to suit changing conditions?

Vidyasagar's pamphlet roused a storm of protest and vituperation. Undaunted, he issued another tract

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1. See Vidyasagar, op. cit.
2. Hunter, op. cit., p.10.
3. See India, forty years of progress and reform.

entitled, "Should widows be allowed to marry? In this he displayed great ability in Bengali composition. The champion of widow re-marriage was also one of the pioneers who were building up a prose literature in Bengal.

Men who had never before written a word rushed hand in hand with eminent pundits to publish books indicting Vidyasagar's work. Hundreds of songs were composed, hundreds ofplays written, to quell the zeal of the great reformer with biting satire.[1] A small group of followers, however, gathered round him. An agitation and a counter-agitation developed rapidly. All Bengal breathlessly watched the clash of two hostile ideas.

Vidyasagar tried to secure the help of Raja Radha Kanta Deb, who had great influence over the orthodox community. The Raja arranged two debates in succession between Vidyasagar and the learned pundits who were arrayed against him. No conclusion, however, was reached. Though the Raja was much impressed with Vidyasagar's power of argument, his conservative instincts prevailed, and he refused to lend his support to the cause of reform.

The vernacular journals of the time zealously entered the field of controversy. Most of them were against

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1. Chamatkar Mohan, August 28, 1858.

the reform. The Tattwa-bodhini Patrika, the organ of the Brahmo Samaj, published Vidyasagar's pamphlet in full. On the other hand, Iswar Chandra Gupta and Dasarathi Roy, the two greatest poets of the time, composed songs ridiculing the idea of the marriage of widows. Songs, in fact, became a powerful instrument of propaganda against the reform. They were heard in streets as well as in rice-fields. Some of them appeared woven on the borders of Santipore cloths.[1]

Vidyasagar was gifted not only with an extraordinary intellect, but with an iron determination. He continued his work in the face of tremendous risks. He published an English translation of his two pamphlets under the title, "Marriage of Hindu widows". On October 4, 1855, he submitted to the Legislative Council of India a petition, bearing a thousand signatures, praying for a law on the re-marriage of widows. Some of the foremost men of the time, including Prasanna Kumar Tagore and Ram Gopal Ghose, had signed the petition. It was pointed out that such a law would only be permissive, and would in no way affect those who were against remarriage.[2]

On November 17, 1855, a draft Bill of "An Act to remove all legal obstacles to the marriage of Hindu widows" was

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1. S.C. Mitra, op. cit., pp.266-8, 275 et. seq.

2. Proceedings of the Legislative Council of India, 1855, p.738. See also S.C. Mitra, op. cit., pp.281-2,285,2

brought before the Legislative Council by J.P. Grant. It was read for the second time on January 19, 1856, and referred to a Select Committee.

Petitions began to pour into the Legislative Council. More than forty of them, bearing between fifty and sixty thousand signatures were against the Bill. One of these was signed by Raja Radhakant and 36,763 others. Another came from the pundits of Nuddea, Triveni, Bhatpara, Bansbaria and Calcutta. The petitions in favour of the Bill were twenty-five in number and contained more than five thousand signatures, including those of men in the forefront of public life.[1]

The Select Committee submitted its report on May 31, 1856, in favour of the enactment. On July 12 the Council resolved itself into a Committee upon the Bill. J.P. Grant spoke, assessing the respective importance of the petitions which had been received. Those in favour of the measure, he said, showed that the movement had not been launched by a single party: it had spread in different parts of the country, and had the zealous support of a large number of enlightened Hindus.[2]

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1. Ibid, pp.206-7,309. Chamatkar Mohan, August 28, 1858; Proceedings of the Legislative Council of India, 1856, 11,434.

2. Proceedings of the Legislative Council of India, 1856, 339, 434 et. seq.

On July 19 the Bill was read for the third time and passed as Act XV of 1856. A week after, it received the assent of the Governor-General.[1]

An obstacle was removed from the path of the reformers. The battle was at last won. But the fruits of victory were mockingly snatched away by the hand of tradition. People did not come forward to marry widows. For four months no one ventured to take the initiative. The first marriage contracted under this Act took place on December 17 of that year - a memorable day in the calendar of social reform. On the night of the marriage a procession was seen passing through the streets, guarded by columns of policemen: a riot was feared: Vidyasagar himself, calm and impassive, escorted the bridegroom's palanquin.

The two leading Bengali newspapers of the time, the Bhaskar and the Sambad Prabhakar, respectively supported and denounced the marriage.

Several such marriages were celebrated during Vidyasagar's life, each of which cost him a large sum of money. Besides, he had to provide for the maintenance of many poor families who were persecuted by the Hindu society

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k. Proceedings of the Legislative Council of India, 1856, [illegible]

1. Ibid, 453 et. seq.

for associating themselves with the re-marriage of widows. Vidyasagar's limited income from books was not at all sufficient to meet these expenses, and he fell into a heavy debt of half a lac of rupees, so that in his old age he had to seek re-entry into public service. He was a victim of ruthless persecution. Attempts were made on his life. It was with the help of a faithful servant that one night he escaped a murderous attack. Once he learnt that a certain wealthy man had engaged ruffians to waylay and beat him, and that they were looking for an opportunity. Vidyasagar at once went to the rich man's house and encountered him surrounded by flatterers and dependents. Asked why he had come, Vidyasagar replied that he had heard that some men had been engaged to beat him; to save them trouble he had thought it better to present himself. And he asked them to carry out the threat. The audience bowed their heads in shame and begged to be pardoned for their ill conduct.[1]

No law could, in fact, effectively remove the social taboo against the marriage of widows. The Act of 1856 was to the reformer nothing but a foothold from which he could shoot his arrows. For forty years Vidyasagar struggled with his opponents and tried to change public opinion. Yet the

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1. S.C. Mitra, op. cit., pp.322-3.

results achieved were poor. For this, however, the Act itself is partly to blame. It had not dared to preserve for the widows all their civil rights. A Hindu widow who married again forfeited all property which she had inherited from her first husband - "as if", says the Act, "she had then died". The question had been carefully considered by the framers of the Bill, and the Select Committee had come to this conclusion: "The very peculiar interest which the Hindu Law of Inheritance gives to a widow in her deceased husband's estate is really, if the texts are examined, intended to be no more than an interest durante viduitate. The conditions on which it is given to her are inconsistent with a second marriage."[1]

The advocates of reform pleaded that whatever might be the doctrine laid down in the texts, justice demanded that the law should be changed. It was maintained that the evils of early widowhood had their roots in child marriage. Practically all Hindu girls of good caste were either wives or widows beforethey were fifteen. The reformers urged that the marriage of girls under twelve should not be recognized. A second proposal was to declare

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1. Hunter, op. cit., pp.6,30.

illegal, under severe penalties, the consummation of marriage with a girl under the age of twelve; and in case of her widowhood, to authorise the courts, upon the girl's application, to declare the marriage null and void. These proposals, however, were in advance of the times, and roused bitterness and anger. It was not until a period of slow and patient preparation had gone by that the Age of Consent Act of 1891 was passed.

A further suggestion was that the Government should help the cause of reform by placing civil disabilities upon young men who contracted early marriages: it might be notified, for example, that married students would not be permitted to sit for University examinations: unmarried candidates might be given a preference over married ones for official employment.[1] The time, however, was premature for the Government to take any such action.

The movement for the re-marriage of widows was taken up by the Brahmo Samaj, and the principle was accepted by other sections of the Hindu community; but the theory is still seldom carried into practice. The widow who marries again, though no longer looked upon with abhorrence, is still

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1. Hunter, op. cit., pp.14-15, 32-5. See also N.M.Chandra, Letter on Infant Marriage and Enforced Widowhood.

regarded with contempt. The number of child widows, however, has diminished, owing to the enlightenment of public opinion with regard to early marriage.[1]

Another social evil which poisoned the lives of many Hindu women was polygamy. The practice, in its worst form, arose in this way: Ballal Sen, who reigned in Bengal in the twelfth century[2] conferred the honour of Kaulinya - an Order of Merit - on nineteen Brahmins who possessed certain qualifications, such as learning and good behaviour: they were designated as Kulins. In course of time the qualifications which entitled a Brahmin to this high rank were disregarded, and the honour was enjoyed on the basis of purity of descent from the original Kulins. Marriage alliances with Kulins were eagerly sought by Brahmins of lower ranks. The Kulins found it profitable to form such alliances in return for gifts of money. They turned marriage into a trade. Some of them were known to have married no less than four wives in a day. It also happened sometimes that a man gave all his unmarried daughters and sisters, irrespective of

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1. "The champion of the Hindu widows died a disappointed man, like so many of those who were in advance of their age, leaving his message unfulfilled". - Banerji, A Nation in Making, pp.8-9.

2. Cambridge History of India, vol. III, p.511.

their age, to the same Kulin Brahmin. Cases were known of Brahmins who had married more than a hundred wives. They were certainly not required to support their wives, since these did not leave their parental homes even after marriage: on the other hand, the husband would not even visit any of his wives except for a gratuity. The Kulin Brahmins made their living by making a periodical tour of their wives' houses. This, indeed, was sometimes their only source of income.[1]

William Ward wrote that the Kulins formed the most corrupt class among the Brahmins. He gave the instance of a Kulin who, in spite of his numerous wives, had seduced the wife of another Brahmin by impersonating her husband. It happened, not infrequently, that a wife never saw her husband after the nuptial night.[2] Ward also wrote that the Kulin Brahmin often had a numerous posterity. One Brahmin, for example, had more than forty wives and nearly as many children.[3]

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1. P.N. Bose, Hindu Civilisation, vol. II, pp.59 et. seq.

2. This is the theme of Bamuner Meye, a well-known novel by Sarat Chatterji, the greatest living writer of fiction in Bengal. A man of low caste goes to the wife of a Kulin Brahmin, impersonating her husband. A girl-child is born. Years after, when the child has reached the marriageable age, the imposture is found out. The girl then becomes the object of bitter persecution.

3. Ward, History, literature and mythology of the Hindoo (1820), vol. 2, p.105.

The wives of these Brahmins of high pedigree were often little more than infants, disparity of age being of no consequence. On the death of a Kulin, his numerous wives, many of them immature and standing on the threshold of life, were doomed to widowhood. The parents, however, were unperturbed by such an incident: should they not avert the disgrace of having an unmarried daughter in the house even at the price of her life-long misery?

Ram Mohan Roy wrote against the vile system.[1] Vidyasagar, however, was the first to launch an agitation against it. The movements for the suppression of polygamy and the initiation of widow re-marriage went side by side. In December, 1855, Vidyasagar submitted to the Government a petition signed by 25,000 persons, among whom were many influential men, praying for a law against polygamy. Next year the Government received many such petitions. One of these, submitted by a Zamindar of Deccan, was signed by a large number of pandits. But the petitions failed. Government had then already passed the Widow Marriage Act and thought it imprudent to follow it up with a law against polygamy.[2]

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1. R.M. Roy, English Works, p. 380.

2. S.C. Mitra, op. cit., pp.555 et. seq. Proceedings of the Legislative Council of India, 1856, 416, 419, 491.

The Mutiny stopped the course of social legislation. But, as the dark clouds cleared, the Bengali press took up again the threads of agitation. At the end of 1858, Kalikata Patrika, a periodical of moderate views, denounced the system. It said that social customs tended to build up a rigid tradition; and tradition was the thorny barrier on the path of progress. Reason, not tradition, should guide the minds of men. No intelligent man should blindly stick to a custom as if he was a member of a caravan. Tradition often made slaves of men. The Kulin system had certainly done so. It allowed a Brahmin to marry as many girls as he liked. He could even have five or six sisters as his wives. Was this not as bad, the journal asked, as the abhorrent system of fraternal polyandry prevailing in Tibet?[1]

A strong indictment of Kulinism appeared in the Paridarsak, which also had moderate views, in December, 1861. The writer declared it to be an immoral practice, and expressed surprise that the Government did nothing to suppress it.[2] Agitation against the evil was strengthened, four years later, when the Sambad Pravakar indicted it, and Vidyasagar entered

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1. Kalikata Patrika, vol. I, no. 3 (1858), pp.3-4.
2. Paridarsak, December 13, 1861.

again the field of battle.[1] On February 1, 1866, Vidyasagar submitted to Government a petition signed by 21,000 persons. The petition said that it was the duty of the authorities to suppress social abuses which were relics of customs founded neither on reason nor on religion.[2] Prevakar, commenting on the petition, said that it was unnecessary. People had already become conscious of the evils of Kulin marriage, a cruel and criminal system, and preferred to give their daughters to Brahmins of lower status. The Kulins were losing their business and were being forced to work for their living. Public opinion, the journal concluded, would soon root out the system.[3]

On March 19, 1866, a deputation including Vidyasagar and Kristo Das Pal waited upon Sir Cecil Beadon, as representatives of the petitioners. The Lieutenant-Governor said in reply that he had taken a deep interest in the subject, which had called forth a large number of petitions. Sir J.P. Grant had promised to introduce a Bill for the abolition

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1. Sambad Prevakar, April 19, July 6, July 7, 1865.
2. S.C. Mitra, op. cit., pp.557-8.
3. Sambad Prevakar, February 28, 1866.

of Hindu polygamy, and would no doubt have fulfilled his promise but for the Mutiny. In 1862 the Raja of Benares, who was a member of the Legislative Council of India, had tried to bring in a Bill for the purpose; but he had been prevented from doing so by a suggestion of Lord Elgin that some further expression of public opinion was desirable before such a law was enacted. On both these occasions, Sir Cecil Beadon continued, he himself had done his best to advance the measure, the importance of which was second only to the suppression of child marriage. He promised to submit the petition to the Governor-General in Council, and introduce a Bill with His Excellency's permission.[1]

According to the Hindoo Patriot, this petition had been endorsed by all sections of the Hindu community of Bengal. It bore the signatures of great Zemindars, of the most eminent pundits of Nadia, Calcutta and other places, of orthodox Hindus, and of the leaders of the educated class and the Brahmo Samaj.[2] But the Government of India doubted whether the people of Bengal were sufficiently prepared for legislation on the subject. So it desired that further

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1. S.C Mitra, op. cit., pp.560-561. See also S. Chakravarti Vidyasagar, p.67.

2. Hindoo Patriot, March 26, 1866, qp. S.C. Mitra, op. cit., p.562.

inquiries should be made before a Bill was prepared. Acting under its instructions the Lieutenant-Governor appointed a Committee which included leading Hindus. The Committee submitted its report in February, 1867. It said that Kulinism had no sanction in the shastras. Thus far the path was smooth for the passing of an Act making polygamy penal. But the report proceeded to show that although the abuses of polygamy would be condemned by Hindu Law, that Law at the same time sanctioned the dismissal of a wife and the contraction of subsequent marriages on many grounds which in the eye of the English Law would appear frivolous and untenable. The Committee therefore pointed out that it could not recommend the passing of a declaratory Act. It also said that the evils of the Kulin system had been exaggerated.

Vidyasagar, who also was a member of the Committee, differed from his colleagues and maintained that the evils had not been exaggerated and that the decline of the system had not been sharp enough to obviate the necessity of legislation. He therefore urged that a declaratory Act might be passed.

In the meantime a despatch was received from the Secretary of State, who objected to legislation on the matter, since it did not appear that a large majority of Hindus in

Bengal was against the practice of polygamy, apart from its special abuses by the Kulins.[1]

But Vidyasagar was not disheartened by failure. When he saw that nothing could be expected from the Government, he decided to follow a slower method of combating the evil, and proceeded to create public opinion against it. In July, 1871, he wrote a pamphlet called "Should polygamy be abolished?"[2] In this work he showed that the practice was not approved by the Shastras. "The stronger sex of this country", he wrote, "have been cruelly persecuting the weaker one under the pretext of evil customs, of which polygamy is the worst". The book created a sensation. Learned pandits hastened to issue protests against it. To refute their objections Vidyasagar wrote his second pamphlet against polygamy. These two tracts were masterpieces of Bengali composition. A satirical literature sprang up, either supporting or inveighing the Kulin system.[3] Vidyasagar began to translate his tracts into English, possibly with a view to carry the agitation into England.[4]

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1. Buckland, op. cit., vol. I, pp.324-6. See also Report of the Sixth National Social Conference, pp.31 et. seq.
2. Vidyasagar, Bahuvivaha.
3. S.C. Mitra, op. cit., pp.564 et. seq.
4. S. Chakravarti, Vidyasagar, p.68.

All through the last quarter of the nineteenth century, public opinion grew firmer against polygamy. It was denounced not because it had no root in scriptural sanction. The reformers who came in the wake of Vidyasagar cared far less for the shastras than for ideas of social justice. They drew inspiration either from Brahmoism or from Neo-Hinduism. Polygamy fell rapidly into disuse; for a man who married more than one wife, though safe from the hands of the law, was likely to be stung cruelly with his neighbours' scorn. In Bengal today the practice is almost unknown among the Hindus.

Yet another victory was won by the reformers on the question of ocean voyages. The crossing of the "black waters" used to be regarded by orthodox pundits with abhorrence. In Bengal RamMohan Roy was the first to undertake it. Dwarka Nath Tagore followed his example: on his return to India, he was threatened with excommunication unless he expiated his "sin". But Dwarka Nath scornfully rejected the idea of atonement and defied the pandits to do their worst. He could afford to pursue this bold course, being rich and influential. Far more difficult was the problem of the small bands of students who went to Europe for higher studies, and returned to their home-land only to be treated as sinners and outcastes. Some of them, moved by the tears of their mothers, even though undaunted by

the threat of excommunication, submitted to the humiliating prayashitta ceremony, an important part of which was to swallow cow-dung: but others stood their ground, and refused to admit that they had committed a sin by crossing the oceans. A few enlightened pundits lent them support, proving from the sacred texts that ocean voyages were not without religious sanction. Articles on the subject appeared in the press. Pamphlets, many of them satirical, were written.[1] Year by year the number of England-returned Indians steadily increased. At first they formed their own community, which had links with the Brahmo-Samaj. But Hindu society did move, even if slowly. By disowning some of its most enlightened members, it was, as it were, wasting its own blood. Sea-voyages ceased to be regarded with horror in course of time.[2] The Sixth National Social Conference, which was composed of progressive Hindus, carried a Resolution on December 31, 1892, that "neither distant sea-voyages nor residence in foreign countries should by themselves involve loss of caste".[3]

Another social movement, which was inaugurated in the sixties, worked not against any of the evil relics preserved by

1. One of the most well-known satirical works on the subject was Ekgharae (Excommunicated), written by the famous dramatist, D.L. Roy.

2. Banerji, A Nation in Making, p.398.

3. Report of the Sixth National Social Conference, p.15.

tradition, but against a new vice introduced among the educated men of Bengal by Western civilisation. Intemperance had been steadily strengthening since the days of Derozio. Even more than beef-eating, it was considered to be an integral part of English culture. A man who did not drink could hardly claim to be regarded as educated. Orgies of drunkenness took place in the houses of well-known reformers. Some of the most talented men, including Harish Chandra Mukherji, the editor of the Hindoo Patriot, fell victims to intemperance. The youth of Bengal had to be reduced from the evil effects of drink, and for this a re-shaping of the opinion of the educated community was urgently necessary. The Temperance Movement started with this purpose under the leadership of Peary Churn Sircar, "one of the greatest teachers of youth that Bengal has produced". Enthusiastic meetings were held and speeches made. The Temperance movement excited much interest in those days. Vidyasagar, Keshab Chandra Sen and C.H.A. Dall, an American missionary, were its active promoters.[1] In 1866 the Temperance Society sent a petition to the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal praying for the suppression of drinking. The Sambad Pravakar commented on this, saying that intemperance was on the increase, to the great harm of society. The

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1. Banerji, op. cit., pp.7-8, 34. See also Sambad Pravakar Oct. 28, 1865.

Government ought to suppress it by closing down the wine shops: but would it do so, the newspaper asked, since that measure would involve a great lossof revenue?[1]

Keshab Chandra Sen carried the movement into England. On May 19, 1870, he delivered a speech in London on "Liquor Traffic in India". "If you have taught us Shakespeare and Milton", he addressed his English audience, "I ask have you not taught us and our people the use of brandy and of beer?" The British Government, he said, should at once abolish both the iniquitous opium traffic which killed every year thousands of the Chinese people, and the liquor traffic which worked such havoc in India. The excise officers sent up official reports to the Government, mentioning the names of subordinates who had shown large returns. These subordinate officers were regarded as specially efficient. The liquor trade was carried on in India simply for the sake of revenue, which depended for its increase on the further demoralisation of the people. A resolution was passed by the meeting, condemning the sale of liquor for purposes of revenue and in opposition to social and moral interests.[2]

Keshab Chandra Sen also spoke a few days later, at a meeting organized by the East Central Temperance Association.[3]

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1. Sambad Prabhakar, April 10, 1866.
2. K.C. Sen, Liquor traffic in India.
3. Report of a meeting of the East Central Temperance Association on May 29, 1870.

It was not the authorities, however, that helped the cause, but the growth of Indian public opinion. The desire to shock orthodox Hindus, which had been one of the original motives of drinking, was losing force; besides, the foremost reformers of the time, and not the reactionary pundits, were carrying on a powerful agitation against the practice. A monthly temperance journal was started,[1] and a body called the "Band of Hope" was organised. On one hand, a sense of horror was produced, in the minds of the youths against drinking. On the other, the excise policy of Government was attacked, and its evils exposed by means of facts and figures. In 1872 Keshab Chandra Sen invited the opinion of the people on the subject. Many suggestions were received, and were embodied in the form of a petition to the Government. A number of such petitions were sent by different groups of temperance workers. The Board of Revenue saw no possibility of reform. The movement, however, was carried on with undiminished vigour so that there were in India in 1894 no less than one hundred and thirty societies, with a membership of over one hundred thousand, devoted to the cause.[2]

When Vidyasagar first launched his campaign against enforced widowhood and polygamy, there was no organised party

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2. P.N. Bose, op. cit., vol. II, pp.101-2.

devoted to social reform. Strange as it may seem, the younger generation, in spite of their Westernism, did not try to form such a party. Everything was left to individual action. The field of work lay fertile and immense. Society was ripe for further development. The crying need of the time was to combine the tremendous forces which were operating in a scattered and isolated way, and utilise them for a single purpose: — the transformation of society by means of a sweeping agitation. The society which proceeded to attempt this task soon after the year of the Mutiny had essentially religious objectives. "We do not understand social reform as apart from religious advancement", wrote Protap Majumdar, one of its leaders.[1] But this sectarianism did not at the beginning do any harm to the cause of reform. For social reform at that time meant to a very large extent the reform of religion. "Hindu society has a very peculiar structure", Keshab Chandra Sen said in a lecture which he delivered on March 24, 1868. "Here in India we do not see religion on one side, society on the other; but religion and society are interwoven ..... All the social reforms I would propose

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1. P.C. Majumdar, Faith and Progress of the Brahmo Samaj, p.268.

for your consideration ..... are involved in .....
religious reformation".[1]

The students of Western culture had attacked the citadel of Brahmanism, but their unjustifiable excesses had done them more harm than good. The Brahman was still the ruler of society, the interpreter of the shastras, the conservative supporter of all existing customs. It was at him that the Brahmo Samaj hurled its challenge.

The challenge came unexpectedly. For the Brahmo Samaj had, since its birth, remained an obscure body. Ram Mohan Roy, its great founder, had no love for revolutionary ideas. He strove to maintain his caste, at least outwardly, even in England.[2] And even if he was a menace, as the leaders of the Dharma Sabha might have thought, he was removed by death. His successor, Devendra Nath Tagore, was also determined to leave caste intact. The Brahmo Samaj presented a scene of internal conflicts over theological questions. It had little or no influence upon the young. Its members attended, every week, a semi-Vedantic service, and then went home to live like orthodox Hindus. Devendra Nath Tagore

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1. K.C. Sen, Lectures and tracts, pp.206-7,211.
2. R.C. Bose, Brahmoism, p.17.

never attended any Hindu ceremony, but he let the Durga Pujah festival take place in his house and went away at the time on a tour.[1] Harish Mukerji, who established a section of the Samaj at Bhowanipore, celebrated that festival in his house.[2] The Brahmo Samaj was an obscure body of intellectuals whom the orthodox pundits had no reason to fear. Its influence had been felt on the Bengali language, which it had considerably developed, and on the Bengali press to which it had contributed the best periodical of the time. But as a social force it was non-existent. Then Keshab Chandra Sen, a man of dynamic personality, sprang into public life.

Two years before he died, Keshab thus spoke of himself: "If I ask thee, O Self, in what creed wast thou baptised in early life? The Self answers, in the baptism of fire. I am a worshipper of the religion of fire..... Coldness and hell have always been the same to my mind. Around my own life, around the society in which I lived, I always kept burning the flame of enthusiasm ..... I am continually after new ideas, new acquirements and new enjoyments".[3]

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1. P.C. Majumdar, Life and teachings of K.C. Sen./For D.N. Tagore's conception of Brahmoism, see the Adi Brahmo Samaj its views and principles (1870), pp.12-13.

2. R.C. Sanyal, Harish Mukherji, p.53.

3. P.C. Majumdar, Life and teachings of K.C. Sen, p.15.

When in 1857 Keshab brought his fierce enthusiasm into the Samaj, he was still a student of the Hindu College and only nineteen. But he had already given evidence of his restless energy and talents. Two years later, he started the work of social reform, which was to split the Brahmo Samaj, and force the Hindu leaders to flash for the time the red signal of danger.

While he was in College, Keshab had produced a number of Shakespeare's plays and developed a talent for stage management. He regarded the theatre as a powerful instrument for reforming social evils. The enforced celibacy of widows being one of the worst evils of the time, it was appropriate that Keshab took up the production of the "Bidhaba Bidhaba Natak" (Widow Marriage Drama). The play was first performed early in 1859 and created a sensation in Calcutta. Vidyasagar came to see it more than once, and, being tender-hearted, was moved to tears. The young producer of the play, tall and thin, suffering from vertigo and only keeping up his strength with port and cod-liver oil, was greatly encouraged.

Next year, when he was twenty-two, Keshab published his first pamphlet, "Young Bengal, this is for you". Tireless in activity, he had found a new instrument of propaganda: the written word. His first pamphlet was followed by a dozen others.[1]

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1. Ibid, pp.114-6. See also K.C. Sen, Young Bengal this is for you.

In August, 1861, he started the Indian Mirror as a fortnightly journal. Help came from Manmohan Ghose, who became later an eminent barrister. But the written word could not absorb the restless energy, the desire to break new ground, with which Keshab was filled. So he founded the Calcutta College with the help of his friends who volunteered as honorary teachers. In April of the same year the most significant event in his chequered career took place - his installation by Devendra Nath Tagore as Acharya (Minister) of the Brahmo Samaj.

For some time past the young Brahmos had been educating their wives. It was now resolved that women should participate openly in the ceremony of Keshab's installation. The young Acharya went to fetch his wife, whom he had married before he had joined the Brahmo Samaj, from her village home, to take part in the ceremony. His biographer gives a vivid description of what happened there. The inner courtyard of the house presented a lively spectacle. The men of the family, reinforced by servants and stalwart gate-keepers, stood ready to resist the outcaste. Keshab, followed by his wife, who was then hardly more than fifteen, came out ofhis room and strode past the groups of angry relatives. Not a word was exchanged. The very audacity

of the defenceless man threw the others into inaction. When the couple reached the gates, the gate-keepers refused to let them out. Keshab advanced a step and simply commanded them to open the gates. "He had that about his face which on great emergencies compelled immediate obedience". The gates were opened, and the two passed out. They went to the house of Devendra Nath Tagore.[1]

Much more was implied in this bold step than the rescuing of a wife from her family prison. A reformer had come, resolved to shatter the purda system and give women freedom. For a time he had Devendra Nath's assistance. That eminent head of the Tagore family had always been a conservative so far as social reforms were concerned. But he was so much under the influence of Keshab that he willingly made great concessions. When the question whether Brahmin members of the Samaj should continue to wear the sacred thread began to be discussed, Devendra Nath threw away his own badge of caste superiority. He went further. Since Ram Mohan's time only Brahmins had been allowed to speak from the pulpit of the Brahmo Samaj. In violation of this principle Devendra Nath appointed Keshab, a non-Brahmin, as the Acharya; he also

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1. Majumdar, op. cit., pp.138-41.

appointed as Upacharya (Assistants) two persons who had renounced the sacred thread. The appointment of Keshab as the Minister of the Samaj was the signal for disruption.

The battle against caste had begun. In August, 1862, a marriage was celebrated under Keshab's inspiration between two persons of different castes. Devendra Nath did not attend the ceremony. He had no liking for the marriage of widows, far less for intermarriage. He did not try to obstruct Keshab's reforms, but as they multiplied and became more aggressive, his mind was troubled by a feeling of secret uneasiness.

There was in the Brahmo Samaj a group of elderly men who were bitterly opposed to the new ideas which Keshab had introduced. They noticed the uneasy feelings of Devdndra Nath and waited for their opportunity. While Keshab was away on a missionary tour in Bombay and Madras, another intermarriage took place. The elderly men objected to it, but the younger members of the Samaj had their way. The conservatives now began to work upon the misgivings in Devendra Nath's mind, and persuaded him to check the tide of social reform. When Keshab came back from the tour he found that his work as a reformer would be strongly obstructed.

Devendra Nath wanted to revive the Hinduism of the Upanishads: Keshab wanted to build up a new society.

Devendra Nath believed in the superiority of the Brahmin and the proprieties of Hindu marriage: for such ideas Keshab had nothing but scorn. Devendra Nath had made compromises with the reforming zeal of the young enthusiast: but a time came when he feared to go further and was persuaded even to retrace his steps. Keshab wanted the affairs of the Samaj to be administered on democratic principles through a Pratinidhi-Sabha (Committee of Representatives): Devendra Nath wanted to retain his dictatorial power.

After an inward struggle the leader of the Brahmo Samaj decided to join the camp of reaction. He began by cancelling the rule which debarred Brahmin ministers wearing the sacred thread from admission to the pulpit. The struggle reached its final stage in October, 1865. The radical reformers retired from the Adi Brahmo Samaj, as the institution was then called, denouncing it as "a useless survival of the past, a mere historical landmark".

On November 11,1866, Keshab established the Brahmo Samaj of India. The great majority of the younger Brahmos came over to him, and the Adi Brahmo Samaj of Devendra Nath Tagore began to decline.[1] In 1870 Keshab went to England and

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1. Ibid, pp.170 et. seq.

was enthusiastically welcomed. He spoke at meetings and was received by the Queen.[1] On his return to Calcutta he created the Indian Reform Association "for the social and moral reformation of the Natives of India". A weekly pice paper, the Sulav Samachar was founded as its organ.[2] The paper met with unexpected success, and three to four thousand copies were sold every week, an unprecedented sale at that time. This indeed was the beginning of cheap newspapers in Bengal.

In February, 1871, Keshab established a school for Indian women. This began to be well-attended. Female education advanced rapidly. The school was followed by the founding of a society called Bama Hitaisini Sabha (Society for the welfare of women). Women took part freely in its discussions, which were presided over by Keshab himself. Its secretary, Radharani Lahiri, worked hard for the improvement of her sex. The debates of the society were often published in Bamabodhini Patrika, which was the first women's journal in India, having been started in 1862.

The Brahmos helped the development of social ideas also through marriage reforms. They established strict

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1. See Collet, K.C. Sen's English visit.
2. P.C. Ray, Life and Experiences, p.31.

monogamy, and explained the responsibilities of marriage to the parties bound in wedlock. They excluded from the marriage ceremony the foolish expenses and unnecessary pomp which were customary with the Hindus. They sanctioned intermarriage - a severe blow to the caste system. They denounced the enforced celibacy of widows. They denounced child marriage. Keshab, as president of the Indian Reform Association, addressed a circular letter to the most eminent medical authorities in India, seeking their opinion on the question of the proper marriageable age for Hindu girls. In a speech delivered in the Town Hall at Calcutta he summarized their views and declared that for the time the minimum marriageable age would be fixed at fourteen; it would go up as the years passed and public opinion became more enlightened.

A great agitation was started on the question of the Brahmo form of marriage. The Brahmo marriage was illegal, being without the sanction of Hindu law. This meant the illegitimacy of Brahmo children and confusion in the inheritance of property. The Hindu pundits made much of the illegality of Brahmo marriage. So the Brahmos had to memorialize the Government for a law relieving them "from their legal incapacity to contract marriages according to their own ritual" The memorial was strongly opposed by the Hindus, and even more

strongly by the conservative Brahmos led by Devendra Nath Tagore. After four years of struggle and anxiety the agitation was successfully concluded: on March 19, 1872, the Brahmo Marriage Act was passed. It made polygamy impossible in the Brahmo Samaj. Child marriage was abolished, since the husband was bound to have completed the age of eighteen years, and the bride fourteen. The Act ignored caste distinctions and recognized intermarriage.[1]

Keshab considered the passing of this Marriage Act as the greatest triumph of his career as a reformer. He was now at the height of his influence - a bold thinker, a powerful writer, a speaker who could play on the emotions of his audience even as a great violinist plays on his instrument. His speech poured forth, as Lord Ronaldshay observes, "in torrents of rugged eloquence ..... stamping him ..... as a seer - a man inspired with a message for the world".[2]

The Brahmo leader was opposed alike to stagnation and radicalism. He wanted to hasten slowly. He had done much to break the purdah system: but he always believed that the right sphere of activity for women was their home. "Women must be given freedom" he said in March, 1872, at a

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1. Majumdar, op. cit., pp.245-50.

2. Ronaldshay, Heart of Aryavarta, p.50.

meeting of the Bengal Social Science Association, attended by 1,200 men, including the Governor-General and the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal. "But", he added, "a limit should be fixed ..... Female emancipation must be preceded by education and moral training. And do not bring about violent changes in this matter. It is a most delicate experiment. Do not entertain the spirit of sudden innovation in your mind, but go on slowly and calmly".[1]

History has recorded the lives of men who have fired the minds of their followers with dazzling ideas of social or political reform. But their ideas having been realized, they have feared to travel further. The march of new thought, however, resistlessly goes on, and the old leaders lose their position at the head of the movement. Such was the destiny of Surendra Nath Banerji. But a worse fate befalls the leaders who set up one rule for their followers, and another for themselves, as did Keshab Chandra Sen.

A party had arisen in the ranks of the Brahmo Samaj of India, opposed to Keshab's counsels of caution with regard to social reform. The men who formed it desired the complete emancipation of women. A heated controversy

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1. K.C. Sen's Lectures in India (1904) pp.314-7

arose on the question whether women should be seated in a covered gallery in the Brahmo Prayer Hall, or be allowed to mix freely with the male congregation. Keshab supported the older, conservative custom. The breach appeared first in 1872, but widened greatly two years later. Keshab's opponents started a magazine called Samadarshi (Impartial Observer). They also tried to start a rival congregation.[1]

The rupture came in 1878. In February of that year it was announced that Keshab's eldest daughter, who was not yet fourteen, was to be married to the Maharaja of Kuch Behar, not yet sixteen. The announcement roused the severe protest of members of the Brahmo Samaj of India. They protested because the wedding was not to be celebrated in accordance with the Act of 1872 which had ruled out early marriage.

Keshab ignored the protests. It was stated on his behalf that the ceremony would only be a formal betrothal. As it happened, the marriage was celebrated according to Hindu ritual. It was as if Keshab had in vain seceded from the Samaj of Devendra Nath Tagore. It was as if he had fought

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1. Majumdar, p.282.

in vain for the Brahmo Marriage Act. One of the greatest principles which he had himself enunciated was at stake. Should early marriage be allowed in the ranks of the Brahmo Samaj of India? Keshab, indeed, did not for a moment stand for the resumption of that vile custom. He said that an exception must be made of his daughter's marriage: for, in this matter, he was acting in accordance with a divine revelation. "In doing this work", he said, "I am confident I have not done anything that is wrong. I have ever tried to do the Lord's will, not mine. Surely I am not to blame for anything which I may have done under Heaven's injunction".[1]

A cynical critic would laugh at this. He would explain the allusion to divine revelation as an act of self-deception springing from opportunism. Even the God-fearing Brahmos, who were neither cynical nor disbelievers in divine revelations, were, with a few exceptions, convinced that their leader was an opportunist. To marry his daughter to a prince he had sacrificed a long-cherished principle.

Carried away by his reforming zeal, Keshab had severed his ties with the conservative elements led by Devendra Nath Tagore. Now, in his turn, he was left by the

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1. P.N. Bose, op. cit., vol. I, pp.155-6.

progressive wing of his associates. The marriage of Keshab's daughter was the immediate cause of the rupture. But, sooner or later, rupture was probably inevitable. Keshab had spoken of the Adi Samaj, from which he had seceded, as a useless survival of the past, a mere historical landmark. Those scathing words were now applicable to the Brahmo Samaj of India.

The seceders, led by Siva Nath Shastri, formed the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. The Adi Samaj had begun to decline with the establishment of the Brahmo Samaj of India; the latter in its turn went on the down grade with the establishment of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj.[1]

The day was quickly approaching, however, when the entire community of the Brahmos was to be cast upon the shallow backwaters of society, isolated from the deeper stream. A new force was arising, which may be called Neo-Hinduism. The old religion, threatened with disruption, was renewing itself. This it could easily do, since it was not fettered by a cast-iron creed and was always open to new interpretations. The Neo-Hindus were liberals in the field of religion

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1. Ibid, pp.157, 163. For further accounts of the Brahmo Samaj see Slater, Keshab Chandra Sen, and R.C. Bose, Brahmoism.

tolerating all faiths, and sceptical of image-worship, though unprepared to attack the practice. They were certainly the product of Brahmoism, which never attracted a large number of men into its samaj, but acted as a powerful ferment in the parent society. Neo-Hinduism started to grow by the end of the seventies, and drew to itself the sap which would otherwise have flowed into another faith. The Brahmo Samaj had done good work. It had driven forward the cause of social reform with untiring energy: it had tried to rationalize religion: it had made thousands of men conscious of great evils, such as caste, so that they had proceeded boldly to re-assess the old social values. Having played its role, Brahmoism passed off the historical stage: and if it ever again made its voice heard, that voice came merely as an "aside" from behind the scenes. Neo-Hinduism took its place: but not Neo-Hinduism alone. Society in Bengal presented at this time a curious, complex picture, very different from what it was a decade earlier. New streams of thought flowed out and met each other, mingling, and yet remaining apart. While Brahmoism was declining and Neo-Hinduism growing, a mysterious figure sat in a Kali temple, a few miles from Calcutta, and preached the cult of the Mother. And even in the most sceptical circles among the educated men

of Bengal the voice of this illiterate Brahmin was heard. The Kali temple became the haunt of the atheist and the God-intoxicated, the unquestioning devotee, and the cynical intellectual Ramkrishna Paramhansa was an enigma, a strange, irresistible magnet. What was the secret of his power? His great disciple Vivakananda who preached with extraordinary results in America and Europe, could never answer this convincingly. Nor does Romain Rolland succeed where Vivakananda failed.[1] Protap Majumdar, a contemporary of the saint, and a famous leader of the Brahmo Samaj of India, wasprofoundly bewildered when he thought of him. "What is there in common between him and me?" he wondered. "I, a Europeanised, civilised, self-centred, semi-sceptical, so-called educated reasoner, and he, a poor, illiterate, unpolished, half-idolatrous, friendless Hindu devotee? Why should I sit long hours to attend him, I who have listened to Disreali and Fawcett, Stanley and Max Muller?..... And it is not I only, but dozens like me who do the same".[2]

It is possible that Ramkrishna Paramhansa had an unusual aptitude for auto-hypnotism. His visions came from his sharply concentrated will: the Mother who haunted his

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1. R. Rolland, Prophets of the new India.
2. Ronaldshay, Heart of Aryavarta, p.206.

sight was of his own creating. And the countless Hindus who flocked to him were seekers after that strange yoga concentration, seekers after self-delusion. Reformers might have flocked to the saint for a different reason. It often happens that men who are engaged in social or political reconstruction are stunned by the stupendous difficulties of their task. They, even more than others, seek strength and inspiration from unseen powers. Failure deepens this urge. It is significant that the Terrorists of Russia developed a mystic faith. So did the Terrorists of Bengal. It is not difficult to understand why reformers, who were breaking tradition with one hand and averting angry blows with the other, should weary of the task, and try to escape for a while in the clouds of a mystic religion.

The struggle for social reform lost part of its strength in the revival of the Hindu faith. But it lost much more owing to ideas which came not from Vedic India, but from contemporary Europe. Political thought was casting its spell over the people of Bengal. And while foreigners like Colonel Alcott and Madame Blavatsky sought for the message of the East, the Indians themselves became more and more interested in the battles waged in Europe round the banners of liberty and democracy, and, as they watched, they made their own war plans and prepared to leap into the battle on their own account.

C H A P T E R V.

GROWTH OF NATIONALISM.

The military rising of 1857 filled the middle classes of Bengal with fear and hope: if the mutiny succeeded, they feared, the clock of progress might be put back by a century and more: if the British Government won, they hoped, it would reward the loyalty of educated Indians by conceding their prayers.

The middle classes were bitterly disillusioned. Their loyalty was recognised, but not rewarded. The Queen's Proclamation, which had appeared at first sight to promise a new millenium, became practically a scrap of paper. The transfer of sovreignty from the Company to the Crown was not followed by substantial concessions to the Indian people.[1] It is true that the doors of the new Legislatures were opened to the native race; but those doors were narrow, and, in any case, the concession was inadequate. Besides, a spectre had arisen from the battle-fields of the mutiny, and was stalking over the length and breadth of the country. Never before had there been such an exhibition of race antagonism.[2] Englishmen who had loved India before the mutiny now hated it. Their hatred bred even a darker hatred in the

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1. Som Prokash, April 1, 1861. See also A.C. Majumdar, Indian National Evolution, p.29.

2. A Hindu (K.D. Pal), Mutinies, Government and the people, pp.9,10,13.

hearts of Indians, and the vicious circle was completed.

The distinction between the ruler and the ruled became sharper. For some time there had been considerable social intercourse between Englishmen and Indians. But as more and more of the former came into the Eastern country, they established their own white colonies - little islands dotted over a vast, unfathomable sea of the brown race.[1] And the term "native" which does not seem to have been used before in a deprecatory sense, and had appeared so often in the documents of the British Indian Association, became tinged with contempt. The opening of the Suez Canal shortened the distance between India and England, but widened the inner gulf between them. English officials began to return home more often, and their interest in the country which they served greatly diminished.

The indigo oppressions inflamed minds already in an indignant mood. The Nil Durpan affair added fuel to the fire. The Som Prokash said that if it had taken place in any other country, the banner of rebellion would have been unfurled. The journal asked the people to unite and agitate against the planters and the Judges of the Supreme Court.[2]

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1. R.L. Bose, Sekal ar ekal, pp.3-4.

2. Som Prokash, July 29, 1861.

The disarming of the people did not materially affect the middle classes of Bengal, who had no use for fire arms, but hurt their pride - the more so, owing to the discrimination regarding the possession of arms between Europeans and Indians.[1] The incivilities of petty officials, European and half-caste, added insult to injury. Occasionally, there were cases of atrocities committed by Englishmen. These nearly always went unpunished. The Som Prokash commented angrily on the ill conduct and indiscipline of British soldiers: if such things continued, the journal said, the people would be forced to take the law into their own hands.[2]

The accelerated inflow of foreigners was viewed with fear and disapproval. The judicial privileges enjoyed by British-born subjects, which was the source of much injustice, were deeply resented.[3] The educated petty bourgeois of Bengal began to feel with increasing bitterness not only that the steel frame of foreign rule was expensive, but that it cramped their architectural conceptions and desires, and was wholly inconsistent

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1. Ibid, February 2, 1863.

2. Som Prokash, Jan. 21, 1861. See also Hindoo Patriot, Jan. 17, 1861, Som Prokash, Sept. 23, 1861 and March 10, 1862, and Collet, Keshab Sen's English visit, pp.224-5.

3. Som Prokash, Dec. 3, 1860. See also Calcutta Review, 1866, vol. 43, pp.365-8.

with the building up of an Indian government. The number of educated men was rapidly increasing while there was no adequate expansion of their prospects of employment. Economic discontent grew steadily among the middle classes. A large number of Indians began to find that the time and money which they had spent in the University were of no avail, and those who were highly qualified and ambitious brodded sullenly over the fact that foreigners came to their country, year after year, snatching away the plums of office. There arose a demand for simultaneous Civil Service examinations in India and England, but it was ignored by the Government.[1] The system of education was partly to blame for the growth of discontent: the education offered to the students was too literary; science and commerce and technology were neglected. It appeared that the main function of the Education Department was to produce clerks: and since it produced more clerks than were needed, a surplus was left over, indignant, and despairing of employment.

In the early seventies of the last century, anti-British ideas, which had been sown in the soil of Bengal, began to burst into shoots. The processes of growth and of renewed sowing were carried on under the guidance of the press. The

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1. Sambad Pravakar, May 3, 1865.

newspaper had become a powerful instrument for the spread of propaganda. The days of its struggle for existence were over, since the people had learnt to regard it as a necessity, not a luxury. Technical improvements in make-up and print did not keep pace with rapid improvements in style, nor was there an adequate news-service to facilitate the editor's task. The Indian newspaper of the time had more space for views than for news. It resembled, on a much lower level, the English "high-brow" weekly of today. While the production of a newspaper became less hazardous a task than before, by virtue of the newly-created demand of a reading public, which was continuously growing, the problem of the paper's distribution was solved by the development of the railway system. The railway and the postal service helped the rise of nationalism in India. They were as nerves connecting distant regions with the centre of thought, Calcutta. They brought province nearer to province, making India less and less of a geographical expression. They enabled agitators to travel quickly from place to place, and prepared the conditions under which a party could take political action at the same moment in a town in Bengal and a village in the Punjab. They helped to re-cast the psychology of the people, inducing them to think in terms of a single, indivisible unit - India.

Of this the 'seventies' saw no more than the beginning. Those fruitful years saw also a rejuvenation of culture, a great outburst of creative energy. Half a century before, a new age had been heralded by a handful of students. They had shattered much, but built little, and the wreckage had been left over to hinder the wheels of advance. There had followed a period of slow preparation and steady thinking. Social reform had given rise to formidable movements, shaking men out of the sleep of centuries, while anti-British feelings had not yet found an outlet in political action. In the 'seventies', however, this began to be reversed.

The new spirit of nationalism was not born in India. It came to the country from other shores. Europe was in the throes of vast political upheavals. The editor of the Som Prokash saw into the dynamics of these movements more clearly than any other Bengalo journalist of the time. "Italy has secured independence", he wrote in April, 1861. "The Emperor of Austria is granting some measure of freedom to the people of Hungary. The Czar of Russia is working for the emancipation of the serfs. The Sultan of Turkey had resolved to grant self-government to Syria. But we in India are being denied our rights".[1] Resuming the question in a subsequent number of the

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1. Som Prokash, April 1, 1861.

journal, he wrote: "The desire for freedom is sweeping a great many of the countries of the world".[1] Between the year when this was written, and the year preceding the Vernacular Press Act, when Dwijendra-Nath Tagore, the editor of the monthly Bharati, spoke of the "unendurable agony of living in the prison of alien rule",[2] the spirit ofnationalism was permanently enshrined in the heart of the Indian people.

While the drama of passing events roused the imagination of the educated Indians, the political ideas which were the life and soul of those events stirred his intellect. These ideas came, principally, from two men who stood poles apart from each other: Mill and Mazzini.

The popularity of Mill in Bengal was due to the fact that he supplied a section of the people with a sword which was greatly in demand. The tangle of social and economic problems could not be unwound: it had to be cut. And the only instrument which seemed suitable for the purpose was Representative Government. It is easy to imagine the throbbing of heart with which the educated Bengali read these words on the first page of Mill's book, on Liberty: "The aim of patriots was to set

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1. Ibid, April 22, 1861.
2. Bharati, vol. I, no. 1 (B.S.1248) p.2.

limit to the power which the ruler should be suffered to exercise over the community . . . . the establishment of constitutional checks".[1] And he fully endorsed the view expressed in another of Mill's books that Representative Government combined "the greatest amount of good with the least of evil".[2] He read : "The Government of a people by itself has a meaning and a reality; but such a thing as government of one people by another does not and cannot exist. One people may keep another as a warren or preserve for its own use, a place to make money in, a human cattle farm to be worked for the benefit of its own inhabitants. But if the good of the governed is the proper business of a government, it is utterly impossible that a people should directly attend to it".[3] Reading on further, he was gratified to see the expression of a view the truth of which he had learnt from bitter experience: "When a country holds another in subjection, the individuals of the ruling people who resort to the foreign country to make their fortunes are of all others those who most need to be held under powerful restraint ..... Armed with the prestige and

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1. Mill, On Liberty, p.1.
2. Mill, Representative Government, p.1.
3. Ibid, p.334.

filled with the scornful overbearingness of the conquering nation, they have the feelings inspired by absolute power, without its sense of responsibility ..... They think the people of the country mere dirt under their feet".[1] And again, he found support for an action to which he had committed himself: "A people may be unprepared for good institutions; but to kindle a desire for them is a necessary part of the preparation ..... What means have Italian patriots of preparing the Italian people for freedom in unity but by inciting them to demand it?"[2]

While the English philosopher was received as a friend, the Italian revolutionary was hailed as a prophet. The politically conscious Bengali was realizing that no movement confined to one province only would be powerful enough to carry its purpose. This realization came partly from experience, and partly from the teachings of Mazzini, who had successfully fought to build up a united Italy. India, and Italy, before its unification, had certain points of resemblance. Both were divided into provinces which had little communion with each other. Both were geographical expressions. Italy needed a unifying force. So did India. Mazzini found such a force in Nationalism.

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1. Ibid, p.338.
2. Ibid, p.11.

"Ungrateful Italy may not give you your due honour, but India has started to adore you", wrote the editor of the Bengali monthly, Aryadarsan. "Gautama Buddha lost hold of his own country, but today he rules a third of the people of the earth. Even so you, unadored by the Italians, have become the object of worship of Indians".[1]

Jogendranath Vidyabhusan, who wrote these words, did more than any other Bengali journalist of the time to make the name of Mazzini a household word among his educated countrymen. He was probably the first Indian to write a life of the Italian patriot, thus long anticipating Vinayak Savarkar, the well-known terrorist, and Lajpat Rai, the Congress leader. Vidyabhusan also translated the autobiography of Mill. Though his name is hardly remembered today he was one of the foremost writers of the time. Gifted with a fine sense of Bengali style, he could write vividly and rouse emotion, and nothing interested him so much as political thought. His articles in the Aryadarsan mark him out as the exponent of certain ideas which, above all others, dominated the mind of the educated Bengali in the 'seventies'.

"We had thought that a nation which had executed its King for the sake of liberty could not steal the liberty of others". Vidyabhusan thus voiced the disillusionment of his

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1. Vidyabhusan, Charitmala, p.41.

countrymen. "We had not thought that a people who had fought down the slave-trade with the might of its battle-ships would be so eager to make slaves on their own account. Who had ever imagined that such glaring contradictions might reside side by side in human nature?"[1] And disillusionment, developing more and more, gave rise to bitterness. "England has done much good to India, but there can never be any friendly feeling between the conquering and the conquered, between a nation that ruthlessly exploits and the exploited..... Exploitation has indeed become so terrific that it is as if Destiny has sent the white race to this country for its economic annihilation. ..... Liberty is dead ..... In whatever direction we turn we see British guns aimed at us, we see the glint of British bayonets. All round us there are walls and walls, and the aliens are the guardsmen of this vast prison".[2]

While criticising the rule of foreigners, Vidyabhusan admitted that the new political ideas had come from the West and, to a great extent, from England. "The desire for self-government", he wrote, "we have acquired from English literature. The dream of liberty has been roused in our minds by English history. The vision of a united India has risen from the English administrative system ..... Indians are rapidly becoming a great nation".[3]

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1. Vidyabhusan, Hridayochas, p.8.
2. Ibid, pp.72-3.
3. Vidyabhusan, Chintatarengini, p.37.

Having diagnosed the political malady from which Indians were suffering, the editor of the Aryadarsan suggested a cure which he had learnt from Mazzini. "Union is the tap-root of strength", he wrote. "Hindu society is disunited and therefore powerless. It is an aggregate of innumerable castes and communities at war with each other. Until we transform Hindu society into a centripetal body, we shall not, politically speaking, become a nation. The hatred of the upper classes for the lower is a source of immense weakness. It keeps away the lower classes from political agitation. They know that their condition is not likely to improve by a change of government. The upper classes, being numerically small, are powerless in the political field without the active assistance of the lower classes".[1]

But Vidyabhusan was far from wishing to adopt the plan of action of the Italian revolutionaries. He desired no secret societies. He sought political freedom by constitutional methods. The following words must have found an echo in many hearts: "Union and self-sacrifice alone can give us strength. If India's two hundred millions unite, their combined breath will blow the aliens away. If all India unites, there will be no need for armed uprisings. The best

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1. Ibid, p.14.

weapon of a weak race is tearful prayer. Two hundred millions of us will wail together and beg for our natural rights. The liberty-loving English people will not lend a deaf ear to this piteous cry".[1]

It may seem strange to hear a disciple of Mazzini thus pleading for a constitutional movement as opposed to armed uprising, and pleading for it in a manner which would today be received even by the Congress leaders with sarcastic laughter. The sincerity of his feeling need not be doubted. The middle classes of Bengal were as yet wholly unprepared to lend their support to a programme of violence. While they accepted some ideas of Mazzini, they rejected others, and a quarter of a century was to pass before there arose among them militant groups prepared to take revolutionary action. The following words of Surendranath Banerji are significant. "Upon my mind", he wrote, "the writings of Mazzini had created a profound impression ..... I discarded his revolutionary teachings as unsuited to the circumstances of India and as fatal to its normal development, along the lines of peaceful and orderly progress; but I inculcated, with all the emphasis that I could command, the enduring lessons of his noble life, lived for the

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1. Vidyabhusan, Hridayochas, pp.77-8.

sake of others, his lofty patriotism, his self-abnegation and his heroic devotion to the interests of humanity".[1]

The spirit of nationalism found in Bengal a home far more congenial than in any other part of India. The Bengali mind springs readily to new ideas. It is quickly fired by an enthusiasm which is a fierce but short-lived flame. Bengal held the political leadership of Northern India.[2] And it began to build up a united front of many provinces as the only means of developing its own fighting strength. Hence, there took place, in the 'seventies', a rapid growth of the conception of Bharatbarsa, not simply as the Motherland but as the Mother. Not that the conception was new. But the dust of centuries had gathered round the Mother's image and concealed it from view. The conception of the homeland as the Mother dated back, probably, to the nature-worship of the Vedas.[3] The political thinkers of the new era revived it. Here, again, support came from Mazzini. The Italian had defined nationality as the "individuality of peoples". What was this individuality, the Bengalis argued, but a conscious Being? If historical movements were not the blind play of chance, was it not likely

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1. Banerji, A Nation in Making, p.43.
2. J.F.B. Tinling, An Evangelist's tour round India, p.6.
3. Pal, Soul of India, Part I, pp.144 et. seq.

that there was a personality behind racial evolutions? The Hindus of a much earlier age had, indeed, conceived such a personality behind the history of their motherland, and addressed it as Mother.[1]

The conception of the goddesses Kali and Durga as Bepin Chandra Pal rightly explains, is co-related with this Mother-cult. Kali is the symbolized image of a stage of human evolution when society was rent with tribal conflicts. She stands in the bloody desolation of war, naked, holding the dripping heads of men who have fallen in the struggle, revelling in carnage, darkened by the passion of a fighting humanity, a dreadful goddess bestriding the prostrate body of Siva, the symbol of the good, her lord and lover. At a higher stage of racial evolution Kali is no longer herself, but has taken the form of Durga, the ten-headed goddess. She is the symbol of organisation, harmony and unity. Brute force has not been eliminated, but brought under control, and the lion, the king of beasts, is the willing slave of the Mother. On one side of her stands Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, and on the other side, Saraswati, the goddess of learning. At the Mother's feet is Kartikeya, the handsome god of war: society no longer presents a picture of tribal conflicts, but of great national

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1. Ibid, pp.165-6.

struggles, and militarism has been highly organized, and invested with outward attraction. Besides these three, there stands in the group Ganapati, the Eelephant-headed god, the symbol of the highest wisdom[1], whose worship was revived by Tilak in the closing years of the century.

Conceived in different symbolic forms, as Kali or as Durga, the Mother was regarded as the soul of India, with the atructure of the country - the mountains and rivers and plains - as her physical embodiment. "Our history", wrote Bepin Chandra Pal, "is the sacred biography of the Mother. Our philosophies are the revelations of the Mother's mind ..... The outsider sees her as mere earth, and looks upon her as only a geographical expression ..... But, we, her children, know her ... as a Being . . . And we have always . . . worshipped her as such"[2].

The Mother-cult found expression in nationalist songs, which began to be composed in large numbers. They were extremely popular among the educated classes of Bengal. Some of them were on the lips of almost every one who could sing. The songs disseminated the nation-idea by portraying the Indian continent as a single unit. One of them ran thus: "How long will it take thee, Bharata, to swim across this ocean of misery?

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1. Ibid, pp.171 et seq.
2. Ibid, pp.188-9.

Or, wilt thou be chilled with fatigue, and go down for ever into the nether regions? Having given thy wealth to the foreigners, thou carriest an iron chain on thy breast . . . Hark! The blacksmith and the weaver wail with hunger. The people feel the loss of freedom at every step . . . Lament, Bharata. Lament, until thine indignities are cast off in the depths of the ocean".[1]

Another song, set to more solemn music, recounted the glories of ancient India. The chorus was, "Sing the glories of Bharata. Hail Bharata! Sing, sing, without fear. Torn and scattered and divided, you are full of weakness. In union you will find strength. Be not afraid to sing the glories of the Mother".

The following song written by a blind poet goes in a similar strain: "Speak, my bugle. And loudly sing these words: Every one is awake in this wide world, Bharata alone lies asleep. Even China andJapan are free and superior. Bharata alone knows no waking".[2]

Many songs were written to spread the illusion of a golden age that was past. It was this illusion, indeed, which proved, as will be shown later, the weakest link in the chain of nationalist ideas.

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1. Pal, The new spirit, pp.18-9,25-6.

2. Ibid, pp.18-21.

The note of freedom struck by the nationalist songs of this period was, obviously, of a sentimental kind. An English translation cannot convey their strength and beauty, their music, and power of rousing emotion. Songs are an effective means of propaganda in Bengal. They pass rapidly from mouth to mouth. They sink into the mind, and, shorn of their music, produce naked ideas, which themselves develop and beget others. How the emotional Bengali must have brooded over the thought: "Bharata alone lies asleep!" The sentimentality of the pre-Congressite nationalist songs was followed, years later, at a period of intensive agitation and sullen anger, by a certain grimness, a militancy of gesture. The more they tighten their chains round our limbs, the more certainly will the chains snap. The more their eyes redden, the sooner will ours open from sleep". The untranslatable song of Rabindranath Tagore which begins thus mirrors the spirit of this later age.

Yet it was in 1882 that the greatest nationalist song of Bengal, unsurpassed even today, was first published. It was named Bande Mataram, Hail Mother! Its author was Bankim Chandra Chatterji, the acknowledged leader of a brilliant band of writers who were creating the new Bengali literature. The Bengali language had already become a powerful medium of

expression through the efforts of men like Akshoy Kumar Dutt and Vidyasagar. But the element of beauty was still lacking. Bankim and his colleagues sought to give the new prose a smoothness and swing which it needed. They all succeeded in this task, in varying degrees, but the achievement of none was equal to that of Bankim, to whom they willingly conceded the title of "king of letters". As editor of the monthly Banga Darsan, Bankim set a standard of literary criticism which gave a healthy tone to the language and helped to root out the weeds which had grown up. It was, however, as the first great writer of fiction that Bankim rendered his highest service and achieved an undying fame. The first great Bengali novelist is still one of the greatest that the country has produced.

The salutation "Hail Mother!" was put into the mouth of one of the characters in Ananda Math,[1] a romantic novel full of speed and colour. This novel has been translated into English under the title, "The Abbey of Bliss".[2] The story is based upon historical facts. In the early seventies of the eighteenth century, when the Mughal Empire was falling to pieces, there took place in Bengal the well-known sannyasi rebellion[3] which caused anxiety to Warren Hastings. The

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1. First edition, 1882.

2. First edition, 1906.

3. See Gleig, Memoirs of Warren Hastings, vol. I, pp.282,294, 296-8. See also Hunter, Annals of rural Bengal (1897) pp.70-1.

sannyasis or ascetics are the chief characters in the Ananda Math and the events of the rising form the main ingredients of the story. Organized in secret societies, the sannyasis live in the depths of the forest, and to acquire the necessary funds they waylay and seize the Company's revenue collectors. They call themselves the children.

In the forest there stands the Abbey of Bliss. The novel depicts Mohendra, a new recruit, being led there by his sannyasi guide. On the way, the guide sings, "Hail Mother!" "Who is the Mother?" Mahendra asks. In reply the sannyasi sings another verse: Behold, this is our Mother: well-watered, laden with fruits, cooled by the south wind, green with the growing corn. Worship her and establish her in your homes". Mahendra is puzzled and cries, It is our country and no mortal mother". "We have no other mother", the sannyasi replies, and begins to sing again, weeping with emotion.[1]

Mahendra is taken to different shrines in the Abbey. In one he sees the Mother as she was. Then he finds himself in a dark chamber, and looking ahead at a dreaded image, he cries, trembling, "This is Kali". "This is the Mother as she is today", the sanyasi explains. Next, he sees a figure of exquisite beauty, to whom the world is paying homage. This, the sannyasi tells him, is the Mother as she should be.

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1. B.C. Chatterji, Ananda Math, pp.31 et. seq.

Mahendra wants to know when the motherland will assume this glorious form. And the reply comes: "When all the children of the Mother learn to call her so".[1]

Another part of the novel is of much interest. Mahendra has been for some time associated with the children. He has fought in their ranks against the Company's men. He is now fit to be a sannyasi himself. When he is about to receive initiation in the presence of Kali, Satyananda, the saintly leader of the society, explains to him the aims and methods of the children. They are a religious community, fighting not to seize power for themselves, but to destroy the enemies of the gods. Their great ideal is to punish the perpetrators of evil and bring about the salvation of the Mother. The sanction of religion is thus given to deeds of violence. It is also interesting to notice that the sacred vow of the children included the renunciation of family and wealth, complete celibacy and the abandonment ofcaste.[2]

The historical significance of the Ananda Math lies in the fact that twenty years after its publication it provided the terrorists of Bengal with a religious and political ideal. It seems unlikely that Bankim sought to promote a revolutionary movement . He certainly did not desire notoriety as an enemy

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1. Ibid, pp.40-1.

2. Ibid, pp.91 et. seq.

of the Government which he served. "Revolutions", he wrote in his preface to the Annanda Math,"[1] are processes of self-torture, and rebels are suicides". The man who was adopted by terrorists as their apostle seems in reality to have been an apostle of non-violence. He combined patriotism with loyalty to the British Crown. And his patriotism was deeply tinged with religion.[2] The great national song which he composed formed a golden shrine of the Mother idea, attracting not a handful of terrorists only, but ~~hordes~~ thousands of others ~~as well~~. Lord Ronaldshay rightly states:"'Bande Mataram!', the battle cry of the children, became the war cry not only of the revolutionary societies, but of the whole of nationalist Bengal, which differed from the societies in method only, and not in aim".[3]

For the Muhammadan rule against which the children struggled, the terrorists substituted the British. They found inspiration in the ideal of religious revival, which is the essence of Bankim's story. Barindra Ghose, the leader of the first batch of the Bengal terrorists, went in search of a guru (religious preceptor), before starting his subversive activities, and found one in the forests overhanging the Narmada river.[4]

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1. Ibid, Preface to the first edition.

2. N.C. Sen-Gupta, Prefatory note, Abbey of Bliss, pp.vii et. seq.

3. Ronaldshay, Heart of Aryavarta, p.114.

4. B. Ghose, Barindrer Atmakahini. See also H. Sarkar, Revolutionaries of Bengal, and D.G. Mukherji, My Brother's Face.

Jotindra Nath Mukherji and some other terrorists who fought desperately against the British police in the forests of Balasore in 1915 had assumed the names of the chief characters in Bankim's novel. The terrorist vow was very similar to the vow of the children. The members of the Dacca Anushilan Samiti, for instance, had to take the vow of austerity administered to Mahendra by Satyanenda. A terrorist appeal entitled "A call" and headed with the salutation "Bande Mataram" ran thus: "Come, sons of India, casting aside desire for pleasure, luxury, wealth and worldly attachment, come forward to devote yourselves to the worship of the Mother".[1]

The cult of the Mother had a deep psychological effect on immumerable men who were not attached to terrorist principles. The Bengali press was the instrument by means of which the new worship was spread. "Come Mother, the destroyer of the demons", the Dacca Gazette wrote, "and appear at the gates of Bengal".[2] (The term "demons" was used by nationalists with reference to Englishmen). The Khulnevasi burst into poetry: "Awake, Oh Mother, who tramplest on the demons! Thy helpless sons, lean for want of food, worn out in the

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1. Ronaldshay, op. cit., p.115. For further information see the East India Sedition Committee's Report.

2. Chirol, Indian Unrest, p.18.

struggle with the demons, are struck with terror at the way in which they are being ruled. Famine and plague and disease are rife, and unrighteousness triumphs. Awake, Oh Goddess Durga! I see the lightning flashing from the point of thy bow, the world quaking at thy frowns, and creation trembling under thy tread. Let a river of blood flow, overwhelming the hearts of the demons".[1]

It may be noted, in passing, that the Mother was frequently represented in the early years of the present century as Chinnamasta, the Headless Goddess. She held in one hand her head which had been severed from her body, while the blood gushing from her trunk ran into her open and upraised mouth. This has been interpreted as symbolizing the Motherland, decapitated by the English, and yet keeping her vitality unimpaired by drinking her own blood.[2] It is unlikely, however, that the English could be thought capable of decapitating a goddess. A more plausible explanation is that the Mother had beheaded herself, as an act of supreme self-sacrifice, which was to be the means of her resuscitation.

The terrorists of Bengal, seeking religious sanction for their fiery faith, zealously adopted the Mother-cult which had developed during the years preceding the Congress. The

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1. Ibid, p.19.

2. Ibid, pp.102-3.

nationalists, too, worked in this direction. But the Mother-cult was much more than a force sweeping the Hindus under political banners: it was a great picturesque wave in a stormy sea of religious reaction. The day was long past when atheism was popular in school and college, and educated Bengalis had looked upon Western ways of life as perfections which ought to be imitated. Bengal had begun to recoil upon itself. In the early eighties the pendulum ~~swung~~ of thought was swinging as violently towards the worship of ancient India as it had, years earlier, swung to the worship of the Western spirit.

It is clear that the new nationalism looked with vengeful eyes upon the "demons". Bepin Chandra Pal, who was much more moderate at this time than two decades later, complained that patriotism has become in certain quarters, a synonym for an unreasonable hatred of the English people. To abuse the English was the easiest way of becoming a hero. The journal which libelled the English most won the largest circulation.[1] This, however, was not unexpected. What was rather unexpected was that these libellous, filled with unthinking zeal, should overreach themselves. In the years preceding the Congress they began to denounce not only the Government, but English English ideas and institutions. This was a dangerous step to take. Nationalism in Bengal was itself the product of

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1. B.C. Pal, Basis of Political Reform, p.15.

English education. John Stuart Mill, the apostle of the nationalists, was an Englishman. So were Locke and Bentham. For these the Bengalis had much admiration, and their favourite English literature, that of the Romantics, was a literature of revolt. Apart from the great thinkers and poets, English institutions had helped the Bengalis to conceive and project a political structure for themselves. Considering these facts it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that Macaulay, the author of the famous Minute on education, was the father, even if an unwilling one, of Indian nationalism. To denounce everything English as unsuitable for India's needs was of equal disservice to the country, and ingratitude to the foreigner. But the feeling which lay behind it, the cult of India and her past, possessed an historical importance . It built a dam across the stream of social reform, so that the gathering water might be canalized and used for a political purpose.

The new Chauvinism created the fiction of the golden age of the past.[1] That this was no more than a fiction is indisputable. Philosophic guesswork rather than the evidence of history was employed to make it appear an established fact. In the beginning of civilization, the sacred texts

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1. Ronaldshay, Heart of Aryavarta, chapter on "Panegyrics of the past".

declared, was the Satya Yuga, the Era of Truth, which was followed by the Treta Yuga, when truth continued to prevail though assailed by demoniac enemies, the age in which the events described in the Ramayana took place. Then came the Dwapara Yuga, the period of the Mahabharata, an age of transition. And at the end of it the Kali Yuga was to come. Vices would run rampant. Rival peoples would hew each other. The Era of Sin would continue until a deluge swept mankind into destruction. Living in the Era of Sin, the nationalists of Bengal gazed longingly back through the vistas of time, and came upon a lovely vision. It was their vision of Mother India. She was surrounded by glory and splendour. The people were happy. The sting of poverty was unknown.

It was not until the early eighties that this trend of thought appeared in a crystallized form, though rudiments of it were noticed long before. The new outlook of the Bengalis may well be contrasted with the outlook of a past generation which had challenged the orthodox society with the battle-cry: 'Down with Hinduism, down with tradition'. The earlier batch of educated Bengalis had indiscriminately accepted all that had come from Europe. They had welcomed beef and whiskey equally with the principle of social justice. They had denounced the evil customs of their country, and

laughed at the good ones. Now the process was reversed. The successors of the men who had sung of contemporary Europe began to chant the hallelujahs of ancient India.

Orthodox society looked upon this as a symptom of Hindu revival. Politicians, however, saw in it a golden opportunity of fostering anti-British feeling. Both determined to fan the newly kindled flame. So it happened that religion and politics drew nearer to each other than they had ever done before. The nationalism of the early eighties may aptly be called Religious Nationalism. Ramsay Macdonald has written: "Just as it was in Japan, the Indian national movement has reacted upon creeds, and the young Nationalist inspired by the conceptions of Indian self-government has also responded to a revival of national religion". And again: "The revolutionary movement in Bengal has been based upon a return to Hinduism. Most of the extreme left of the movement performed their temple duties with scrupulous devotion and regarded their political action as part of religious duty".[1]

It is significant that the youths of Bengal were the vanguard of this Religious Nationalism. They interpreted patriotism as a blind praise of all that was Indian, and a

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1. Macdonald, Government of India, p.243.

fierce denunciation of all that was foreign. A custom was judged not by its intrinsic quality, but by its place of origin.[1] This obviously implied the drowning of reason in sentiment. "The younger generation", a contemporary journal said, "has neither the faith of the elder one, nor the bold, questioning spirit of Europe; it was suffering from the inevitable agonies of a great intellectual crisis".[2]

So the old ideas, the time-honoured customs and ancient superstitions, which had been menaced by the cold dialectic of Westernism, came sweeping in on a resistless tide of reaction. The tide flowed across the years immediately preceding and following the birth of the Congress. A movement arose in defence of child marriage - led by one who had done valuable work in connection with social reform: it was supported by a large number of students though, only a few years earlier, the students of Calcutta had been seeking to suppress the evil custom. A distinguished Bengali writer came out to defend the custom of enforced widowhood: yet this person had, not many years before, at much personal sacrifice helped a young widow to re-marry. The spirit of reaction

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1. Subodha Patrika, June 17, 1888, ap. Patriotism: False and True.

2. Indian Magazine, 1886, ap. Patriotism: False and True.

showed itself in numerous forms. The natural liberalism of youth, as Bepin Chandra Pal phrased it, was replaced by the rigid conservatism of age.[1] It was at the peak of this retrogressive movement that, in 1890, Tilak opposed the Age of Consent Bill, hoping that this action would help to rally orthodox opinion round his political party.[2]

In seeking for the tap-root of this movement, one finds that it sprang up first in Bengal, the province in which the most earnest attempts had been made to bring about social reform. This seems to suggest that the social reformers, dazzled with the new light from the West, overdid their part, giving rise by their violent action to an equally violent reaction. Over-advancing the spark of reform was followed inevitably by a backfire, which dislocated the arms of the reformers and damaged the social machine itself. Such an explanation, however, would not convey half the truth. It is useful to remember that the Brahmo Samaj, which led the reform movement, was in a way also an instrument of reaction. Its monthly organ, the Tatvabodhini Patrika, edited with no little ability by Akhshoy Kumar Dutt, had from the first encouraged the study of ancient

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1. Pal, The present Social Reaction, p.3.

2. Chirol, op. cit., pp.42,75. Many political leaders in Bengal were against the Bill, probably including W.C. Bonnerjee and Surendra Nath Banerji. See Proceedings of a public meeting held to protest against the Age of Consent Bill, p.5.

Indian lore among the educated people. The pace of reform was, after all, slow. Even Keshab Chandra Sen was, at heart, a conservative. The reformers of Ram Mohan's time, riding with gay ferocity, had set up a speed record which no Bengal had ever again attempted to approach. But since the shock they had administered to the minds of their slow-moving countrymen had long been absorbed, it is unlikely that the social reaction of the eighties was the symptom of a reaction to it.

It is probable that the study of ancient Sanskrit was one of the causes of this movement.[1] The orientalist's admiration of India's past greatness removed an inferiority complex. It roused a new pride among educated men. They felt the equals of their rulers, being the inheritors of a high culture. But their political disabilities brought them harshly to earth, and reminded them in no uncertain manner, of the inferior position to which they were doomed in their own country. To escape this reality, they fixed their eyes far away, and began to live in the past of two thousand years ago.

The advent in 1879 of the Theosophists, the American Colonel Olcott and the Russian Madame Blavatsky, was a factor of some importance. They declared that not only was Indian philosophy the highest monument of human thought,

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1. Pal, op. cit., p.5.

but even such Hindu social institutions as caste and child marriage were the outcome of spiritual wisdom and scientific vision. The denunciation of the West by two of its prophets helped to undermine the Indian's already crumbling respect for western culture.[1] That the Theosophists were able to sway the minds of Indians is undeniable. Colonel Olcott records in his diary how his audience was profoundly stirred when, in a meeting at Amritsar, he depicted the "greatness of ancient and the fallen state of modern India".[2]

At a moment when Indians had started to indulge in Narcissian dreams of the ancient glory of their country, and were divided on the question of social reform, there came the Ilbert Bill controversy. When Englishmen made use of caste and child-marriage as arguments against the racial equality proposed by the Ilbert Bill, Indians began to defend these evil customs with a subtle sophistry which comes easily to their minds. What was at first no more than a manoeuvre in a political controversy, crystallized rapidly into a social creed. The dust raised by the Ilbert Bill subsided, but the

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1. Ibid, pp.7-8.

2. Olcott, Old Diary leaves, vol. II, p.255. Lovett, History of the Indian Nationalist Movement, p.29. For an account of the Theosophist Movement, see Olcott, A Historical retrospect (1875-96) of the Theosophical Society.

air remained surcharged with its effects, enabling the spirit of social reaction to pass from strength to strength, year by year.[1]

Bepin Chandra Pal notes that there were different types of reactionaries, each of whom was influenced by a different factor. First, there were the renegades, who had been, at one time, sincere friends of reform. In striving to carry through their schemes, they came against unforeseen obstacles, and found that the reforms did not work smoothly. The accompanying disorders did not prove the weakness of the cause they had at heart, but only the difficulty of innovation. At the failure of their first attempt, these men ran away from their post. Secondly, a number of men were drawn to the reform movement by the rhetoric of popular speakers. As one tide of sentiment brought them over to the movement, so another took them away from it. Thirdly, weak-minded men who were unable to join the cause of reform for fear of social persecution, deceived themselves into

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1. Pal, op. cit., p.9.

believing that reform was unnecessary, in order to quiten their uneasy conscience. This type of men made the most violent attacks on the progressive movements. Finally there were the "political democrats but social Tories" to whom patriotism was another name for a bitter hatred of everything foreign. They withdrew their support from social reform not on principle, but as a matter of policy, since, by doing so, they hoped to draw in numerous recruits to the camp of political agitation.[1]

Of these the type mentioned last is of the greatest interest, since the others - the renegade, the hypocrite and the faint-hearted - are well-known to nearly every reform movement. It has already been stated that Tilak, the champion of political advance, stood firmly for social stagnation. Many years were to pass before Ghandi, who, even more than Tilak, endeavoured to rouse a religious fervour among his followers, gave the wider mass movements a new orientation by linking them up with social reform. Meanwhile, as Sir Verney Lovett puts it in a nutshell, "The path to wider political freedom was to prove by no means difficult to tread. The path to religious and social emancipation was far steeper and less attractive".[2]

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1. Ibid, pp.10-16.

2. Lovett, op. cit., p.30.

The ideological developments in Bengal during the pre-Congressite days affected no more than a small fraction of the people. The peasant masses were, since the end of the indigo revolt, sunk in apathy. Above all, the huge Muslim population of Bengal remained uninfluenced by the growth of nationalism among the Hindu middle classes. The Muslims had neglected to avail themselves of English education, and, therefore, had no knowledge of the principles of liberty and democracy as enunciated by European thinkers. After the Mutiny they had incurred the displeasure of the Government nad had drifted into a backwater. From this time they had begun to lose their numerical majority in the various services, civil and military.[1] It is significant that Sir George Campbell discussed at some length the question whether the Muslims in India were a possible source of political danger. He pointed it out that to the higher classes of Muslims, British rule was not as favourable as to the English-educated Hindus, and unless the balance was redressed there would be a good deal of smouldering discontent among them.[2] He refused, however, to attach much importance to the Wahabee revival, and said: "There has been at one time and another some acceptance of doctrines supposed to be allied

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1. Ibid, p.15.

2. Campbell, British Empire, pp.91-2.

to Wahabeeism in some districts of Bengal, but that would only be of some political importance in connection with agrarian movements". Finally, he expressed his conviction that the Muslims as a body were not hostile to the British Government.[1] Sir Richard Temple also wrote of the excitable temper of Muslim peasants. He had known them listen to the voice of agrarian agitators, threaten their landlords, demand a lowering of rent and surround menacinglg the offices of land agents.[2] This spontaneous rise of economic discontent had no connection with Western political theories. Socialism and Communism were as yet unknown terms in India. The Wahabee revival was not without a certain amount of influence among the Muslim peasants, but that movement owed its origin not to Western but to Islamic sources, and was not merely anti-British, like Hindu nationalism, but anti-infidel.[3] The time was not yet ripe for mass movements, either Hindu or Muslim, with their storm-centres in the villafes. It was a period when political activity was limited to the rising and discontented middle class.

The Muslim upper and middle classes at last realized the perils of their position. They had stood still, while the

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1. Ibid, p.93.

2. Temple, Oriental Experience, p.318.

3. For an account of this movement see Hunter, Indian Musalmans, and Syed Ahmad, A Review of Indian Musalmans".

Hindus had marched on. They had forfeited the confidence of the ruling power, had no press of any importance, and only archaic methods of agitation. They had no organized political society among them, ~~organized~~ built on Western ~~lines,~~ models while the Hindus had the powerful British Indian Association. The first step to redress the situation was taken in April, 1863, when the Mahomedan Literary Society was founded in Calcutta by Moulvie Abdool Luteef, a member of the Bengal Legislative Council. Its object was "to impart useful information to the higher and educated classes of the Mahomedan community by means of Lectures, Addresses and Discourses on various subjects". The society held monthly meetings, and within a few years secured a membership of more than five hundred.[1] At a meeting held on October 6, 1863, Syed Ahmed, who rose later to great distinction, read a paper on "Patriotism and the necessity of promoting knowledge in India". The Society forged from the beginning, links of contact with the Government. Its first annual meeting was attended by the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, and the following ones by succeeding Governors-General and Commanders-in-Chief. It waited in deputation on Viceroys with Addresses of welcome on

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1. Proceedings of the Mahomedan Literary Society, Nov. 23, 1870.

their assumption of office.[1] On more than one occasion the society tried to check the tide of anti-British agitation among the Muslim community. Thus in 1870 when the Wahabee revival threatened to stir up political passions, and it began to be asked whether the preaching of a jihad (holy war) in British India would have the sanction of Islam, the society held a meeting and discussed the subject. It was conclusively proved by references to religious works that British India was Darul Islam (country of safety) and not Darul harb (country of hostility) and that "it would be unlawful and irreligious for the Mahomedans to preach a jihad there against the Ruling Power". Five thousand copies of the Proceedings of this meeting were printed and circulated throughout India.[2]

The Society sought also to promote the study of Western science and literature among the Muslims, and prepared the ground for the work of Syed Ahmad. It is interesting to note that its Committee of Management cordially approved of the Age of Consent Act, disagreeing with the view, which had been "widely circulated", to the effect that the Law would

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1. A Quarter Century of the Mahomedan Literary Society, pp.5-7.

2. Ibid, p.13. See also Proceedings, ut supra.

interfere with the Mahomedan religion.[1]

The task attempted by the Mahomedan Literary Society falls, clearly, under two heads. First, it tried to win back the lost confidence of the Government for the Muslim community by its remarkably loyalist action. Secondly, it sought to break Muslim isolation, and proclaimed the great necessity of contact with Western thought. Along these lines the work steadily went on. As the Hindu political movements broadened and strengthened, the Muslim pace was also accelerated. And as the prospect of Indians sharing power with their rulers became less visionary, the Muslims, frightened by the thought of a Hindu National Government, became more and more self-conscious, and strove hard to organize their community for political action.

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1. A Practical View of the Age of Consent Act, p.2.

C H A P T E R V I.

YEARS OF UNREST AND PREPARATION.

The study of Western political philosophy armed the educated Bengalis with new principles of reform. But what benefit could be derived from this? Soldiers who do not possess a gun have no use for ammunition: even so, the reformers armed with ideas, were doomed to remain ineffectual without an organization. The task was clear, urgent, and extremely difficult. Indians were famous for their capacity for philosophic thought. But it was yet to be seen whether they were as good builders and organizers as thinkers.

Until the spring of 1876 the only organized body in Bengal with a political programme was the British Indian Association, composed almost exclusively of the landed aristocracy. It met frequently, and frequently petitioned the Government, but kept away from political agitation. The middle classes felt the need of an association, built up on democratic lines, admitting more than one class of the community. Pundit Isvar Chandra Vidyasagar and Dwarkanath Mitter, who was then a member of the Bar, and became later a High Court Judge, had conceived the idea of forming a body of

this kind. The time had not been ripe, and the idea had been abandoned. The same idea occurred to Surendranath Banerji during the year 1875, when he was trying to awaken the students of Calcutta to a new life and spirit. The Indian League, formed early in 1876 under the guidance of Sisir Kumar Ghose, editor of the Amrita Bazar Patrika and Sambhoo Chundar Mukherji, of the Rais and Rayyat and Motilal Ghose did not satisfy him. So, on July 26 of that year an inaugural meeting was called and the Indian Association was established. As the name suggests, the Association was to be the engine of an all-India movement.[1] Its first President was Shama Charan Sarkar, an eminent jurist, and author of the Vyabastha Darpan, who was, shortly after, succeeded by the well-known educationist Dr. K.M. Banerji. Its first Secretary was the barrister, Ananda Mohan Bose. Nearly all the leaders of the educated community enrolled themselves as members. Surendra Nath Banerji kept himself in the background in view of his removal from Government service, but was one of the most active members of the Association.[2] The ideals in view were as follows. First, the creation of public opinion in the country; secondly, the unification of the

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1. S.N. Banerji, A Nation in Making, pp.40-1. See also Bengalee, August 5, 1876.

2. A.C. Majumdar, Indian National Evolution, pp.33-4.

Indian peoples on the basis of common political interests and aspirations; thirdly, the promotion of friendly feeling between Hindus and Muslims; lastly, the stimulation of the great masses into political activity.[1]

In the following year the reduction of age-limit for the competitive examination of the Indian Civil Service from twenty-one to nineteen years gave rise to indignant protest all over India. It was regarded as a deliberate attempt to exclude Indians from the Service. The Indian Association seized the opportunity to organize a national movement. A great public meeting was held at the Town Hall on March 24, 1877. It was one of the biggest demonstrations ever held in Calcutta, and was the forerunner of similar and even more crowded meetings held throughout India. It was resolved to appeal to the various Indian provinces and unite them through a sense of common grievance, and a desire for its immediate removal, a thing that had never been attempted before. Surendra Nath was appointed Special Delegate to visit the different provinces, and took up his task with enthusiasm. On May 26, 1877, he started for Upper India, accompanied by a member of the Committee.[2]

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1. S.N. Banerji, op. cit., p.42.

2. Ibid, p.44.

The tour extended over a great part of Northern India, up to Rawalpindi. The principal questions put forward in the campaign were, first, the raising of the age-limit for the Civil Service examination; secondly, the establishment of simultaneous examinations to be held in England and in India for the recruitment of the service. Meetings were organized at Bankipore, Benares, Allahabad, Lucknow, Cawnpore, Meerut, Agra, Delhi, Aligargh, Amritsar, Lahore and Rawalpindi.[1] At Agra the Civil Service Memorial drawn up in Calcutta was translated into Urdu and lithographed. The public meetings in Lahore were attended by Hindus and Sikhs, as well as Mahomedans. This leads Surendranath Banerji to remark in his memoirs that a common system of administration and education had prepared the ground for united action by the different Indian provinces. At one of these meetings the Lahore Indian Association was formed, affiliated to the body in Calcutta, and modelled on its constitution. It was the first political organization in the Punjab to provide a common platform for all sections of the Indian community, and later it served as a vehicle for organizing public opinion in the province. Surendranath also persuaded an eminent Punjabi, Sirdar Dayal Singh, to start a newspaper at Lahore. Thus the Tribune was founded, and a Bengali journalist from Dacca was appointed its first editor. The

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1. A.C. Majumdar, op. cit., p.35.

paper rapidly became very influential.[1]

At Aligargh the public meeting was presided over by Syed Ahmad, and the Calcutta Resolutions, one of which declared the necessity of simultaneous examinations, were adopted. Later, in 1887, however, as a member of the Public Services Commission, Syed Ahmad signed the report of the majority, opposing the views of Sir Ramesh Chandra Mitter and Nulkar who favoured simultaneous examinations. The meeting at Lucknow was also attended by a number of Mahomedans. Political bodies were formed, besides the one at Lahore, at Meerut, Allahabad, Cawnpore and Lucknow. A network of organizations was thus started for concerted action over a great area.[2]

The success in the North encouraged the Association to send its representative on a similar campaign in Western, and Southern, India. Surendranath began his second tour in the winter of 1878, lecturing at Bombay, Surat, Ahmedabad and Poona. Next, he proceeded to Madras, where a public meeting could not be held for lack of interest on the part of the people. Madras was then lagging far behind the other

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1. S.N. Banerji, op. cit., pp.46-7.

2. Ibid, pp.48-9. See also Palit, Introduction, Speeches of S.N. Banerji, p.v.

provincial capitals. A conference of the leading men, however, was held, and the Calcutta Resolutions were adopted.

Sir Henry Cotton has mentioned this unique tour in his book, New India. "The educated classes are the voice and brain of the country", he says. ". . . . The Baboos of Bengal now rule public opinion from Peshawar to Chittagong. . . . . The idea of any Bengalee influence in the Punjab would have been a conception incredible to Lord Lawrence, to a Montgomery, or a Macleod; yet I remember the tour of a Bengalee lecturer, lecturing in English in Upper India, assuming the character of a triumphal progress; and at the present moment the name of Surendranath Banerji excites as much enthusiasm among the rising generation of Mooltan as in Dacca".[1]

Having secured a large measure of public support in India, the Association now resolved to carry the agitation into England. The Memorial on the Civil Service question, addressed to the House of Commons, might have been despatched by post, as had been done in similar cases in the past. But it was felt that the great demonstration in India ought to be followed up by an attempt to explain the grievances of the country before British audiences. Lal Mohan Ghose was

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1. Cotton, New India (1907) pp.27-8.

entrusted with this novel task, and funds were placed at his disposal.[1] It is worthy of note that Bankim, the author of the Ananda Math, expressed the utmost sympathy for the movement.

At a great meeting in London, Lal Mohan Ghose spoke with power and eloquence, drawing a warm tribute from John Bright, who presided.[2] The Indian leaders were much encouraged by the fact that within forty-eight hours of the meeting, the Rules creating the Statutory Civil Service were published.[3] An Act of 1870 had empowered the Government of India to frame Rules for the appointment of Indians to posts previously filled by members of the Covenanted Civil Service. For seven years, Surendranath Banerji said, the Government "had slept over the matter"; but the projection of the voice of united India before a British audience had at last broken its sleep.

The Ghose deputation was therefore regarded as having attained an "unexpected measure of success", and in the following years the experiment was repeated. Lal Mohan

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1. Bengalee, April 5, 1879.

2. Bengalee, Aug. 16, Aug. 23, Aug. 30, 1879. See also Times, July 24, 1879.

3. Times, July 25, 1879.

Ghose's work, it was said, had opened up a new chapter in Indian history. This was, no doubt, an exaggeration, but it indicates clearly how strong a hold propagandist methods had taken on the educated community. Soon after his return Lal Mohan was again deputed to England by the Indian Association.[1]

The Indian Association marked a new departure in organisation as well as method. First, unlike the body composed of the landowners, it attached far more importance to political agitation than to the despatch of petitions. Secondly, it did not base itself on the strength of a single province: inspired by the ideas of Mazzini, it tried, with some degree of success, to become the rallying point of all India. Thirdly, it tried to break the barriers of race and religion, and to draw in not only Hindus and Sikhs, but also the Mahomedans. The social conditions, however, were not at this moment favourable to this task, and a new leadership was rising among the Mahomedans, resolved not only to awaken the community to political action, but to keep its organisations apart and compact.

The experiment started well. Yet the purpose of the Association remained unfulfilled, to be handed on, later, to the National Congress. In 1876 Indian society was still unprepared for far-reaching political developments, and was

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1. S.N. Banerji; A Nation in Making, pp.53-5.

still much more concerned with intellectual enquiry than with concrete political proposals. Between the years 1876 an 1885 great events took place. The heat engendered by the Vernacular Press Act was easily transformed into creative energy. The Ilbert Bill controversy produced a similar result. And during this fateful decade English education ~~continued to make~~ took rapid strides, with its consequent political and economic effects. Though the Association continued to thrive even after the Congress had been founded, in 1886 the leading members of the former were already Congressmen.

The fire of unrest which smouldered during the seventies had been kindled by new ideas, and was fanned by a new series of events. One of these was the Kooka slaughter. On January 14, 1872, a band of nearly one hundred Kookas, a sect of Sikh dissenters with anti-British ideas, broke into open violence and raided the town of Maler Kotla in the Punjab. They were repelled after a bloody fight, and sixty-eight of them, including twenty-two who were wounded, and also two women, were captured.[1] Two days later, Cowan, the Deputy Commissioner of Loodhiana, wrote to his official superior, the Commissioner: "The entire gang has been nearly destroyed. I purpose blowing away from guns, orhanging, the

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1. Letter from Cowan, 17 Jan. 1872, ap. Parl. Papers, 1872, XLV, p.662.

prisoners tomorrow morning at daybreak".[1] On the following day he received a note from Douglas Forsyth, the Commissioner, asking him to prepare a case against the prisoners, and stating that no summary measures were necessary. This note Cowan put in his pocket, and "thought no more about it".[2] In the afternoon, at 4 p.m., forty-nine of the captured men were blown away from guns without trial. While the last batch of six men were being lashed to the guns, an order came from the Commissioner to the effect that the prisoners should be sent up to him for trial.[3] Cowan ignored this, on the ground that it would create a bad effect, and the last six men were also blown to pieces.[4] One of the remaining seventeen men prisoners - the two women had been sent away with the troops to Patiala - broke loose from the guards, and attacked Cowan, but was at once cut down.

On being informed of the incident, Douglas Forsyth wrote to the Deputy Commissioner expressing his approval of what had been done.[5] He then himself visited the scene of

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1. Letter from Cowan, 16 Jan, 1872, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, p.657.

2. Letter from Cowan, 8 April, 1872, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, p.699.

3. Forsyth's letter, 17 Jan. 1872, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, p.669.

4. Letter from Cowan, 8 April, 1872, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, p.699.

5. Letter from Forsyth, 18 Jan. 1872, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, 699.

action and sanctioned the execution of the sixteen men who were still in custody.[1]

The Government of India declared that "the course followed by Mr. Cowan was illegal, that it was not palliated by any public necessity", and that it had a "complexion of barbarity". So it directed "with deep regret" that Mr. Cowan be removed from the Service.[2] The Commissioner was censured and transferred to another division.[3]

The Calcutta correspondent of the Times wrote strongly against the conduct of Cowan, and indicated the danger of other officials behaving in the same manner in order to show that by their prompt action they had checked a threatened rebellion. He criticised Cowan, first, for exceeding his authority as a Deputy Commissioner, and illegally inflicting capital punishment. Secondly, he said, it was an admitted fact that the outbreak had been completely crushed before a single man was blown away. Thirdly, Cowan was within easy reach of the Divisional Commissioner, and had the telegraph at his service. The slaughter could not on

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1. Letter from Cowan, 8 April 1872, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, p.700.

2. Govt. of India letter, 30 April 1872, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, pp.702-3.

3. For his account of the incident, see Forsyth, Autobiography, pp.35 et. seq.

any account be justified. If two or three such acts took place in different parts of India, he added, "the country would rise en masse".[1]

The Anglo-Indian press had nothing but sympathy for Cowan and Forsyth. In marked contrast the Indian press raised a voice of protest, though that voice was extremely cautious. "All friends of humanity have been shocked at the inhuman measure which under the cloak of authority was perpetrated on these misguided men", wrote the National Paper, an organ of the Brahmo Samaj. The Som Prokash said that Timur and Nadir Shah and Suraj-ud-daula had committed slaughter, but such deeds had not strengthened their rule. The Urdoo Guide, a Mahomedan journal, the Bengalee and the Indian Mirror, which was owned by Keshab Chandra Sen, also protested against execution without trial.[2]

Looking back on the incident many years later, Sir Henry Cotton, who had been a Subdivisional Officer in the Nuddia district in 1872, said: "I can recall nothing during my service in India more revolting and shocking than these executions . . . . . The final orders of the Government of

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1. Times, February 26, March 4, March 11, April 3, 1872, ~~pp.35 et. seq.~~

2. Times, April 3, April 8, 1872.

India were lamentably inadequate".[1]

The year 1876 saw the passing of Disraeli's Royal Titles Bill, which declared the Queen to be the Empress of India.[2] The Bill met with opposition in the House of Commons. The Bengalee at first supported it, though with no warmth. "To say that we in India think of grudging Her Majesty any title even fifty times more high-sounding than that of Empress is sheer nonsense.[3] It expressed the hope that the assumption of the Imperial title would be followed by a proclamation granting "substantial privileges" to the people of India. But the paper changed its tone in the course of the debates. A ministerial statement declared: "As Queen was the title held by Her Majesty as the head of the United Kingdom, a state with a Constitutional Government, She ought to be styled Empress of India where the Government was despotic".[4] Gladstone replied that it was improper to boast that Britain had been unable to give India the blessings of free institutions. "I, for one", he said, "will not attempt

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1. Cotton, Indian and home memories, pp.111-3. See also Hansard, 1872, vol. 209, 1157-9.
2. Hansard, 1876, vol. 227, 1733 et seq.
3. Bengalee, April 22, 1876.
4. Hansard, 1876, vol. 227, 428.

to turn into glory that which . . . I feel to be our weakness and our calamity".[1] The Bengalee followed this up by observing that it supposed the new title was designed to mark the inferior status of the Queen's Indian subjects.[2]

Then came the Delhi Assemblage of January 1877, convened to proclaim the Queen's new title to the princes and people of India. The Assemblage was summoned at a time when a cyclone had destroyed a quarter of a million human lives in Bengal, and a terrible famine in the South was threatening millions with starvation. The Bengalee urged the abandonment of the Assemblage, declaring that such a step would have "a moral grandeur more powerful in its effects than any exhibition of material splendour".[3] A week later the paper described the affair as "a gigantic folly", a mere "tamasha" (entertainment).[4] Coming to the question again, it said: "If the Imperial pageant at Delhi takes place while the country is mourning, the object of the Assemblage will be

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1. Ibid, vol. 227, 1737.
2. Bengalee, June 3 and Aug. 26, 1876.
3. Bengalee, Nov. 4 and Dec. 23, 1876. See also B.Balfour, Lord Lytton's Indian administration, pp.188 et. seq.
4. Bengalee, Nov. 11, 1876.

completely frustrated, and the whole thing will leave a very unpleasant impression on the popular mind".[1]

The Assemblage took place with immense splendour. "Nero fiddles while Rome burns", a veteran journalist remarked, voicing the opinion of the educated community. While creating bitterness, the Durbar taught a lesson. Surendra Nath Banerji attended it as a representative of the Hindoo Patriot, and a number of other Indian middle-class leaders witnessed the brilliant function. The question occurred to these men that if the nobles of the land could be made to rally round the Viceroy, why could not the people be gathered together under the banner of a political party, in order to restrain autocratic rule by constitutional means? In illustration of this, Ambika Charan Majumdar, the President of the Congress in 1916, observes: "If the idea of a united India was presented by a spectacular demonstration, the Delhi Assemblage was, in spite of its extravagance, a blessing in disguise". The object-lessons presented by the Assemblage, he adds, "could not be wholly lost upon the mind of a quick and imaginative people".[2]

Lord Lytton's speech at the Assemblage also provoked

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1. Ibid, Dec. 9, 1876.

2. A.C. Majumdar, op. cit., pp.31,36-7.

attack. Surendra Nath Banerji said, with little regard for veracity, that it "negatived and subverted" the pledges conveyed by the Queen's proclamation of 1858.[1] But Indian comment on Lytton's speeches was not always so bitter. His subsequent speech at a Convocation of the Calcutta University elicited milder remarks. The Bengalee welcomed the Viceroy's statement, that the supreme direction of the administrative machine must remain in the hands of Englishmen, as a truthful, though harsh, avowal. But, it said, Indians were not agitating for 'supreme direction'. "We do not want a Bengali Governor-General or a Punjabi Commander-in-Chief; what we want is to see Bengali Judges on the Bench and Punjabee Captains in the Army".[2]

Indignation ran high among the Indian middle class on another question, which was not political but economic. The duty of five per cent levied in India on cotton goods imported from abroad was regarded by English industrialists as a serious hindrance to the trade of Manchester. The Indian middle class, however, was firm in its support of the protective duty. The prospect of its removal led the Bengalee to remark: "If our rulers yield to the demands of Manchester, we believe that a strong spirit of opposition

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1. Bengalee, Feb. 17, 1877.

2. Ibid, March 17, 1877.

will be roused against the Government, a spirit that may lead to the establishment of dharmaghat[1] for the discontinuance of the use of English piece goods". This seems to have been the earliest mention in Bengal of the idea of the economic boycott as a political weapon. On July 10,1877, the House of Commons passed a Resolution favouring the repeal of the protective duties.[2] A month later, the Bengalee suggested that Indians should resolve not to wear any cloth manufactured outside India.[3] It was not, however, until the great happenings of the partition days that the idea of boycott took practical shape.

While the middle class thus declared its support of Indian industries, its sympathies were ranged entirely on the side of Capital, and it had nothing at all to offer to Labour. The terrible conditions in the mills and factories left them indifferent. An agitation for the passing of laws regulating factory labour in India arose first in England. The Bengalee saw in this the hidden hand of Manchester. It regretted that Lord Shaftesbury had called the attention of the House of Lords to the necessity

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1. Ibid, Jan. 8, 1876. See also Bengalee, March 18, April June 3, July 22, 1876.
2. Hansard, 1877, vol. 235, 1085, et. seq.
3. Bengalee, Aug. 11, 1877.

of affording legal protection to child labour in the Bombay mills.[1] Exhibiting an ill-digested knowledge of economics, the paper said: "Questions such as wages and hours of work must all be regulated by the law of supply and demand. There is no necessity whatever for factory legislation in India. Such a law would greatly interfere with the prosperity of the Bombay mills".[2] The apostles of advanced political thought were thus tied down to the old-fashioned and reactionary idea of laissez faire, which had held sway in England half a century earlier.

None of the incidents described - Maler Kotla, the Delhi Assemblage, the repeal of cotton duties and the threatened interference with Indian factories - created a tithe of the political irritation resulting from the introduction of the Vernacular Press Act. It had been preceded by a censorship working in a different field. Lord Lytton issued a Stage Ordinance prohibiting the performance of two plays entitled "Sarat-Sarojini" and "Surendra-Binodini".[3] Then the Dramatic Performances' Bill was drafted, authorizing the police to arrest not only the actors and the manager, but also the spectators of a banned play. A protest meeting was held in Calcutta on April 4, 1876, and the

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1. See Hansard, 1877, vol. 230, 813 et. seq.

2. Bengalee, May 10, 1879 and Jan. 3, 1880.

3. B.C. Pal, ~~Modern~~ The present Social Reaction, p.6. See also Times, March 20 and April 3, 1876.

Bill was described as a "dangerous interference". Similar meetings took place at Lucknow and Cawnpore.[1]

The censorship of the press involved far-reaching questions of principle, as well as of policy. No one had discussed the matter with more frankness and insight than did Munro in 1822. "A free press and the dominion of strangers are things which are quite incompatible and which cannot long exist together", Munro had written: "for, what is the first duty of a free press? It is to deliver the country from a foreign yoke, and to sacrifice to this one great object every measure and consideration". Munro had further said that a free press would spread the principles of liberty among the people, and stimulate them to establish a national Government; and that the danger would come not from the unorganised people, but from the well-organised native army. Imbued with the spirit of liberty, the army would wage a war of independence: in short, the outcome of a free press would be "insubordination, insurrection and anarchy".[2]

Was the Sepoy Mutiny the fulfilment of this prophecy? It is hard to speak on this matter with the voice of decision. The following facts, however, should be noted.

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1. Ibid, May 6, May 20, 1876: Jan 6, 1877.

2. Gleig, Life of Munro, vol. 2, pp.26 et. seq.

The educated Indians, who had imbibed the principles of liberty through a free press, had no desire for armed revolt. The mutineers were mostly illiterate. There were at the time no popular newspapers distributed on a large scale. The political passions of the sepoys may have been stirred by the hand-written akhbars which were in circulation, rather than by printed matter. And having noted these facts one would ask: Was it not possible for the Government to take measures for insulating the native army from the contamination of political ideas? The answer is implicit in the fact that a great interest has swept the masses of India today, but has left the sepoys almost untouched.

The principles of liberty were suggested to the Indian mind at the beginning, not so much by a free press as by educational institutions, the majority of which were managed either by the Government or by missionaries. It was not possible to censor the lessons of English history, the teachings of English political philosophy, and the romantic yearnings of English poetry. All these were, in the long run, sources of danger. Safety might have lain in the patronage of exclusively oriental learning by the Government. But even that could not altogether preclude danger, for other bodies would have established English schools and colleges. Bengalis established the Hindu college many years before the

Government of India had decided to spread the knowledge of English literature and science.

The main content of Munro's ideas on the press, however, was unassailable. A free press and a foreign domination could not long exist together without the one attacking the other. The attack was only a question of time.

A year after Munro's Minute was written, on March 24, 1823, John Adam[1] issued an Ordinance imposing a series of press restrictions. In those days an Ordinance issued by the Governor-General in Council was not valid within the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court until it had been exhibited for three weeks in the Court and had been registered by the Judges. A number of prominent Indians, led by Ram Mohan Roy and Dwarkanath Tagore, took the opportunity to address a Memorial to the Supreme Court, praying that the Judges would refuse to sanction the Ordinance. The Memorial was rejected. The next step of Ram Mohan was to address a petition to the King in Council, praying for a revocation of the Ordinance and urging the necessity of a free press in India.[2] This also failed.

The desired freedom came in 1835. On January 5 of that year a public meeting was held in Calcutta to petition

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1. J. Kaye, Life of Metcalfe, vol. 2, pp.250-1.

2. Samaddar, Ram Mohan Roy, p.28; see also Ram Mohan Roy, English Works, pp.437 et. seq.

the Governor-General to repeal the press Regulations. Dwarka Nath Tagore and David Hare were among the speakers.[1] When the freedom prayed for was obtained, the inhabitants of Calcutta, both Indian and European, held another public meeting, and drew up an address hailing Sir Charles Metcalfe as "the liberator of the Indian press". The Governor-General answered this address with much warmth. Whatever be the consequence, he said, it was the duty of the Government to spread the benefits of knowledge. If India had to be preserved as a part of the Empire by keeping its people in a state of ignorance, British domination would be a curse to the country and should cease. The promotion of knowledge, he added, required the help of a free press, which would be its most efficient instrument.[2] The words were received with applause, and to perpetuate the memory of their author, the inhabitants of Calcutta erected the Metcalfe Hall. Meanwhile, the Home authorities severely reprimanded the Governor-General for passing such an "unjustifiable" Act. They did not, however, disallow it.[3]

A Press Act, of short duration, was passed in 1857 to meet the crisis brought about by the Mutiny. It re-created

1. Calcutta Monthly Journal, Feb. 1835, part II, pp.32 et.seq.

2. J. Kaye, op. cit., vol. 2, pp.260-2.

3. See Despatch from the Court of Directors, 1 Feb. 1836, ap. Parl. Papers, 1857-8, xliii, pp.444-5.

for a time the situation existing before Metcalf's liberal measure. By its provisions no printing press could be run without a licence, which was to be granted on condition that it would not print statements impugning the motives of the Government, or tending to excite disaffection and weaken lawful authority. The Government was empowered to ban the publication or circulation in India of any book or newspaper. "The Gagging Act", as it was called, was resented by Europeans on the ground that the Anglo-Indian and the Indian press had been brought under the same restrictions. On the strength of this Act the Friend of India was warned for its remarks on the centenary of Plassey.[1] The printers and publishers of the Durbin, the Sultan-ul-Akhbar, and the Samachar Sudhabarsan were charged with sedition. A press called Gulshan-i-nau-bahar was seized. The Hurkaru was warned, and then suppressed, but was restored on an apology from the proprietor.[2]

The "Gagging Act" expired with the suppression of the Mutiny, but the Government of India decided to end its isolation from the press. Special attention began to be paid

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1. See Govt. of India letter, 4 July 1857, ap. Parl.Papers, 1857 (Sess.2) XXIX, pp.162-3.

2. For seditious extracts from these newspapers see Parl. Papers, 1857 - 8, XLIII, pp.452 et. seq.

to newspapers written in Indian languages. In Bengal the official translator was entrusted with making weekly abstracts from the vernacular press. These were forwarded to the Government of India and to the Secretary of State, and inquiry was frequently made as to the truth of the statements printed.[1]

In 1873 Sir George Campbell unequivocally spoke of the necessity of a press Act. He had expressed his views on the subject even twenty years earlier. The position of the free press in India under a despotic Government, he had said, was altogether anomalous. Liberty of language could best be accorded in countries sanctioning liberty of political action. Besides, in such countries, the Government also used the press as a powerful weapon on its own side. The opposition papers attacked the Government, and the Government papers defended it. In India, however, the attack was one-sided. It was doubtless a great advantage that the acts of officials should be subjected to criticism; but, on the other hand, it was equally a disadvantage if a Government like that of India was constantly held up to the contempt of its subjects. It was therefore necessary, Campbell argued, that contempt of Government should be made a penal offence.[2]

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1. Buckland, Bengal under the Lieutenant-Governors, vol. I, p.293.

2. Campbell, India as it may be, pp.411-2, 415.

Writing in 1873 Campbell assured the Government of India that the vernacular press was misusing its liberty, and trying to excite seditious feelings. He further stated that all the students in Calcutta might read such writings and yet not rebel, but a translation of them, circulating among the frontier pathans, would have an entirely different effect. His letter concluded with the recommendation that there should be a law to punish summarily and severely, without the èclat of a long prosecution, all those who published seditious libels, and to suppress all newspapers which printed them.[1]

In a despatch dated June 9, 1875, Lord Salisbury called the attention of the Government of India to certain articles published in the Amrita Bazar Patrika in January of that year, of which the tendency was, he said, to justify the attempt to poison Colonel Phayre at Baroda. "To emasculate a nation, that the Government may rule without trouble! Surely to poison an obscure Colonel is by far a lighter crime", the journal had remarked. After consulting with the Advocate-General, Lord Northbrook decided that though the articles fell under the Indian Penal Code, a prosecution

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1. Govt. of Bengal letter, 7 Aug. 1873, ap. Parl. Papers, 1878, LVII, pp.471-2.

would be undesirable, since it was likely to cause more public excitement than the printing of the attack itself.[1]

The vernacular press drew the attention of Lord Lytton soon after his arrival in India. On October 22, 1877, he wrote a Minute, embodying certain suggestions for the better control of that section of the press, and had it confidentially circulated among the Local Governments with a request that they would state their opinions. The Local Governments, excepting Madras, unanimously supported the Vicetor's proposals.[2] The Government of Madras opposed any curtailment of the liberty of the press. With regard to the twenty-three selections (annexed to the Minute) from various papers of seditious writings which had appeared during the previous eighteen months,[3] the Governor observed; "Some of these elegant extracts no doubt savour of disaffection. Many in no way exceed limits of criticism by a free press, although they may state unpalatable truths in strong language". He added that the vernacular press was a useful indication of the undercurrents of local feeling; that if any serious spirit of disaffection appeared among the people, indications would float

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1. Minute by the Viceroy, 22 Oct. 1877, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, pp.479-80; and Govt. of India letter, 18 April, 1878, Parl. Papers, ut supra, pp.467-8.

2. Ibid, p.468.

3. Appendix to the Minute by the Viceroy, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, pp.483 et. seq.

up to the surface through their newspapers; and that the Penal Code was sufficient to punish systematic attempts at sedition.[1]

After considering the opinions of the Local Governments, Lord Lytton decided to introduce a press law. Accordingly, on March 13, 1878, he sent a telegram to the Secretary of State stating that "the increasing seditious violence" of the native press, "directly provocative to rebellion", required a quick and stringent restrictive measure. This, he said, was the unanimous opinion of his Council. A Bill had therefore been prepared, and he proposed to pass it at a single sitting.[2] The Secretary of State telegraphed on the following day, approving of the proposal. On the same day (March 14) the Vernacular Press Bill was entered on the Statute Book. It empowered District Magistrates to call upon the printer and publisher of a newspaper to enter into bonds not to print anything likely to excite feelings of disaffection to the Government. If a newspaper, no matter whether it had entered into a bond or not, contained words or signs of the above description, the Local Government

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1. Minute by the Governor of Madras, 31 Jan. 1878, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, pp.489-90.

2. Telegram from the Viceroy, 13 March 1878, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, pp.439-40.

could issue a warrant to seize and forfeit its plant. Instead of entering into a bond, however, the publisher might, if he so desired, submit his proofs before publication, to an officer appointed by the Government, and agree to publish nothing to which this officer objected.[1]

Reviewing the provisions of the Act, the Secretary of State took objection to that part of it which established a censorship. The variety of languages, he said, would make it difficult to appoint capable censors, well-acquainted with the niceties of the native dialects. Besides, a censor of proofs would in fact write a newspaper which he had to revise. Lord Cranbrook therefore advised the cancellation of that part of the Act.[2] This was subsequently done by the Government of India. On the day before the despatch of Cranbrook's letter, however, at a meeting of the Council of India three of its members, Sir Erskine Perry, Sir W. Muir and Col. Yule, strongly objected to the entire Act, in spite of the support of the remaining ten members. Sir Erskine Perry, who had been Chief Justice at the Supreme Court in Bombay, was most emphatic in his protest. Describing it as a "retrograde measure", which would irritate

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1. Act No. lx of 1878, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, pp.440-44

2. India Office despatch, 31 May, 1878, ap. Parl. Papers, up supra, p.519.

Indians by brandishing before them invidious distinctions of race, he said, that he would struggle to the utmost to have it repealed. He thought that no immediate danger to the State existed on March 14 that called for the passing of the measure at an unusually short notice. He agreed with the Governor of Madras that the offence of the press consisted in stating unpalatable truths in strong language. An unshackled press was also useful to the Government, since it was the only medium for ascertaining public opinion.[1] The remarks of Muir, though less emphatic than those of his colleague, were equally unhesitating. A free press had to be fostered, he said, in order to promote enlightened ideas, create a healthy public opinion, interest the people in administrative matters and gradually educate them into self-government. A free press was the most effective means of elevating and strengthening the national mind.[2] "If it becomes really a declared question between a free press and our hold of India", Col. Yule, who also opposed the new law, "I am certainly not going to say 'Perish India!' but quite the opposite". With regard to the offending paragraphs quoted by the Government of India, he commented that they were unpleasant reading, but even unpleasant

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1. Minutes of Proceedings of the Council of India, 30 May 1878, Parl. Papers, up supra, pp.410-4.

2. Ibid, pp.414-6.

truths should not be suppressed. A free press might, he added, be a necessary substitute for a Parliament in a country where Parliament was impossible.[1]

Was the vernacular press, in general, preaching sedition at this time? Sir Alexander Arbuthnot, introducing the Bill to the Council, quoted some extracts. According to the vernacular press, he said, the British Government was monstrous in its nature, since it had been destroying its own children. The history of the Government was a history of non-fulfilment of promises. According to the vernacular press, the British Raj was week and timid, and would be unable to maintain its position in India. The Kasht Vilasni, a Poona newspaper, compared the Government in India to a cunning traveller who, after having been received in the house of a hospitable gentleman, gradually contrived to oust him and usurp his property: but there would be no difficulty, the paper added, in driving out the usurper if all Indians jointly made a bold effort to do so.[2] Lytton quoted some more extracts, classifying them under two heads. Some newspapers, he said, wrote directly seditious articles, while others concealed the worst inferences in the form of innuendoes. The most daring sedition

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1. Ibid, pp.417-9.

2. Proceedings of the Legislative Council of India, 14 March 1878, ap. Parl. Papers ut supra, pp.447-8.

appeared in the vernacular papers of Upper India. The Malwa Akhbar, for example, published at Indore, wrote of a rumour that Nana Sahab was about to invade India with Russian troops, and would establish once more the dominion of the Peshwas. The same paper also declared that a belief had grown up in the minds of Indians that native rule had many advantages; that the Hindus had begun to think the Musalmans to be natives. It said, again, that the oppression of European officers had become intolerable. Direct attacks on the Government were, however, as Lytton said, fewer in number than the indirect ones, which were full of suggestive inferences. One Bengal paper, after saying that a mighty conflagration was often preceded by a little smoke, went on to point out that twenty-five thousand Englishmen had been ruling over two hundred and fifty million Indians, and the inference was left to the imagination of the reader. Another paper said that the English had become enervated from addiction to luxury, and that their Empire would come to a disastrous end like those of Alexander, Caesar and Bonaparte. The Kiran of Bombay commented that the English had acquired India more by diplomacy and craft than by bravery.[1]

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1. Ibid, pp.462-3. For further extracts see Appendix to the Petition relating to the Vernacular Press Act, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, pp.427 et. seq.

These extracts, culled from the most extreme wing of the vernacular press, and described by Lytton as "poisonous matter", speak to a modern, liberal observer in no more than a half-audible voice of sedition. Stronger language appears with impunity in the Indian press today, and seems to cause the Government much less irritation than the faint mutterings in Lytton's days. The reason is that the Government of India was unaccustomed to criticism sixty years ago. Its depotism was unrelieved by representative principles. Harsh comments sounded in its ears the more "provocative to rebellion" because every member of the Government could remember the Mutiny.

It seems doubtful, however, whether Lytton's extracts were fair samples at all. Maharaja Jotindro Mohan Tagore, who, as a member of the Legislative Council, supported the Press Act, said that educated Indians didnot know of the existence of most of those newspapers. It was a known fact, he added, that the class of writing in question proceeded merely from folly and a spirit of bravado.[1] Indians also criticised the English version of the extracts, and said that they were misleading. Torn from their context, they assumed

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1. Proceedings of the Legislative Council of India, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, p.457.

a different tone and gave a wrong impression. An extract from the Calcutta paper Sahachar, for example, (July 2, 1877) purported to say that the causes which had brought about the fall of Carthage were operating also in England; the extract, however, omitted a passage from the same article, saying: "No age, no country, has ever witnessed any system of administration . . . . like that of the British. The downfall of the British Empire will be the precursor of many evils to the human race".[1] The vernacular newspapers wrote fiercely against foreign domination, and yet they did not refrain from mentioning the benefits derived from it. They used as much soothing oil as vitriol. It would be unfair to say that the soothing oil was intended to appease the Government, while the vitriol was to create disaffection in the minds of the people. In the absence of a restrictive Press Act, the vernacular newspapers might as well have concentrated all their fire on the foreign rule, and drawn a smoke-screen over the good things that the aliens had brought.

It can be said definitely that these writings were not, at the time of their appearance, "directly provocative to rebellion". Indian journalists in the 'seventies' were not prepared to accept a programme of complete independence.

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1. Banerji; Speeches (1876-80), pp.103-5.

They wanted constitutional development rather than an armed revolt. This was probably more true of journalists in Bengal than those of any other part of India, excepting Madras. It can also be said that they were not building up forces of disaffection which would, ultimately, flare up into a rebellion. If an armed revolt was not the immediate objective of the Indian middle class, it was also beyond its future vision. The main function of the socalled seditious writings was to create discontent, which would slowly advance like the tide, breaking over and submerging more and more of the shore.

This slow but certain development was unquestionable. Taking a short view, the British Government could afford to remain liberal and tolerant, conscious of its own immense strength. The vernacular press was small and without much influence. The total weekly circulation of all its papers put together did not exceed a hundred and fifty thousand.[1] This was distributed among nearly two hundred newspapers, of which thirty-five came from Bengal. Most of the Bengali papers circulated between 250 and 500 copies each. During the year 1876-7, the Som Prokash had a sale of 700; the

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1. Minutes of the Proceedings of the Council of India, 30 May 1878, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, p.411.

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 2,217; and the Sulav Samachar was said to have attained the sensational sale of 3,000.[1] It is true that a copy of a newspaper went usually from hand to hand, and was likely to have a good number of readers. Yet, it can be said that the vernacular press was not in 1877 powerful enough to be a menace, even if it wanted to be so, to the British Government.

Taking a long view, however, the Government of India could not watch the growth of an unrestricted press without anxiety. With the development of political consciousness the Indian press was bound to attack the rulers of the country. Munro had truly said that despotism and a free press involved violent contradictions. It was necessary, from the British point of view, to cut the wings of sedition before they had grown strong by flight. It might have been wise, from that point of view again, to retain the temporary Press Act of Canning as a permanent measure. Lord Lytton probably showed wisdom and foresight in trying to redress the balance of forces by imposing necessary limitations.

The restrictions, however, should not have been confined to the vernacular press. Lytton said that his object was to "prevent the open preaching of sedition and

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1. Moral and Material Progress of India, 1876-7, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, p.618.

rebellion amongst the most ignorant, excitable and helpless portion of the subjects.[1] But who were the readers of the vernacular press? There was little primary education at this time, and the vast masses of the people could not read any newspaper, vernacular or otherwise. Only educated people could read them. The vernacular press was indeed in the van of movements striving to build up a new literature, and enrich the language. A paper like the Som Prokash depended for its circulation on the mastery of style and vigour of mind of its contributors. The day was yet far away when the press could reach the villages. Peasants and labourers did not see a newspaper at this time, as Sir Richard Temple said, and were "not influenced by them, either directly or indirectly".[2] The vernacular journals were in fact read by the middle class, which was neither very "excitable" nor "ignorant". In suppressing their freedom, while leaving the English journals, which were also potential vehicles of sedition, unshackled, the Government of India acted in a long-sighted but short-eyed manner. It is interesting to note that the Bengali Amrita Bazar Patrika changed itself into an English journal almost overnight after the passing of the Press Act.

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1. Proceedings of the Legislative Council of India, 14 March 1878, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, p.464.

3. Annual Administration Report for Bengal, 1874-5, p.481.

The Vernacular Press Act was regarded by Indians "as a bolt from the blue"; yet something of its kind had been anticipated. During the Delhi Assemblage a deputation of press representatives, headed by Surendra Nath Banerji, had waited upon the Viceroy, and expressed the hope that the liberty enjoyed by the press would continue unrestricted. The Viceroy, however, had said nothing in reply to this part of the address.[1] Within less than fifteen months the vernacular newspapers were muzzled. The educated community viewed the new law and the manner of its enactment with anxiety and alarm. This feeling was all the more deepened owing to the inaction of the British Indian Association, one of the most prominent leaders of which, Sir Jotindra Mohan Tagore, an unofficial member of the Imperial Legislative Council, had voted for the measure. His vote hampered the independent judgment of the Association, since the other leaders of that body could not disavow one of their most trusted colleagues. Its organ, the Hindoo Patriot, wrote against the Press Act, but without much warmth, and evoked angry remarks from the Bengalee, the paper of middle-class Indians. It was at this time that the ~~five~~ two-year-old Indian Association came forward to launch the "first great political demonstration of the middle-class community in Bengal".[2]

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1. Banerji, A nation in making, p.59.

2. Ibid, p.61.

The first step was to organize a meeting in Calcutta. It was attended by nearly 5,000. Speeches were made by Surendra Nath Banerji and others.[1] A petition was subsequently sent to Gladstone for presentation to the House of Commons. In July a lively debate took place in the House on the Press Act. In an eloquent speech Gladstone deprecated the hasty manner in which the Act had been passed. Analysing its provisions, he criticised the distinction drawn between the vernacular and the English press. But the most unfortunate feature of it was, he said, the removal of press prosecutions from the Courts of justice so that they might be dealt with as matters of Executive discretion, that is, of "arbitrary control". With reference to the Government extracts, he said that there was nothing in them to justify a press law. Gladstone, however, refrained from demanding the withdrawal of the Act. Instead, he proposed a Resolution requiring that every case of the application of the new restrictive measure should be reported to Parliament.[2] Other speakers rose to attack the Press Act, most prominent among them being Sir George Campbell. His speech revealed a certain change of mind since the days when, as the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, he had severely criticised the conduct of

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1. Bengalee, April 20, June 8, Sept. 14, 1878. For the full text of Banerji's speech see Banerji, Speeches (1876-80), pp.93 et. seq.

2. Hansard, 1878, vol. 242,48 et. seq.

the press and suggested stringent measures of control. Like Gladstone he deprecated the haste with which the Act had been passed. The extracts, he said, did not show an increasing violence of language. Those from Bengal, in fact, showed a comparative moderation. Though in 1873 he had advocated a press law, he could not support the one passed by Lytton, and wondered if it was not better to bear the evils of a licentious press than to fly to other evils of an unknown nature. He admitted frankly that he was "a waverer on the matter". He also failed to see the distinction between the vernacular and the English press. "If there was any difference between the two, the papers published in English were by far the most outspoken and licentious". The liberty of the press, Campbell added, should not be destroyed. But there should be provision for warnings, and, if they failed, for "punishment after a summary trial before a magistrate".[1]

Commenting on this speech in a meeting at Calcutta Banerji said that Sir George Campbell had been passing from the school of repression to the school of freedom, and that the mind of a trained despot had changed under the influence of a healthier political atmosphere.[2] Gladstone's Resolution

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1. Ibid, vol. 242, 71 et. seq.

2. Banerji, Speeches, p.116.

had been rejected by the House, but the debate won high applause in India. On September 6 a public meeting was called to thank Gladstone and the other members of Parliament who had condemned the press law.[1] Educated Indians began to pin their faith in the Liberal party as never before. "We devoutly pray for the overthrow of the present ministry", the Bengalee said, "and look forward to the time when the Liberals will again be restored to power".[2] Soon after, Lal Mohan Ghose, the representative of the Indian Association in England, had an interview with Gladstone.[3]

Meanwhile, the Government invoked the Vernacular Press Act against a number of Bengali journals. Its first victim was the Calcutta paper, Sahachar, the publisher of which refused to enter into a bail bond of Rs.500, and ceased to issue his paper.[4] Four other journals, the Bharat Mihir of Mymensingh, the Dacca Prokash and the Hindu Hitoyshini of Dacca and the Sulav Samachar of Calcutta were called upon to furnish securities. It was stated that in none of these cases were the offending passages indicated.[5] The transference of

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1. Report of a second public meeting in connection with the Vernacular Press Act.
2. Bengalee, March 8, 1879.
3. Ibid, June 21, 1879.
4. Times, May 13, 1878; Bengalee, Jan. 4, 1879.
5. Banerji, Speeches, p.106.

judgment from the law courts to the executive created much indignation, and it was said that the Government had assumed the triple functions of prosecutor, witness and judge. Indignation rose still higher when the best Bengali newspaper of the time, the Som Prokash, fell a victim to the Press Act. On March 10, 1879, the Government of India complained of a letter published in the journal two weeks before (Feb. 24), and ordered it to enter into a bail bond for Rs.1,000, and to deposit the amount. The offending letter had been written by a correspondent from Lahore, who had accused the English of oppressing and attempting to enslave the people of Cabul. "Too much greed killed the weaver", it commented. The letter further expressed disappointment with Lord Lytton, who, it said, had raised high hopes among Indians at the beginning of his rule by his Minute on the Fuller case, but since then had dashed those hopes to the ground. It asserted that the Joint Magistrate in question had ~~got~~ been given a "double promotion"; that other cases of Europeans killing Indians had occurred, about which Lytton seemed to have nothing to say; that no more Minutes had come out, and that he had no doubt recovered his senses through the reprobation of his own countrymen.[1]

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1. Bengalee, March 22, 1879.

A word of explanation is required with regard to that Minute. One Sunday morning Mr. Fuller, an English pleader at Agra, struck his groom on the head and face, and the man almost immediately died. The medical evidence was to the effect that he had died from the rupture of an enlarged spleen. The Joint Magistrate who tried the case found Mr. Fuller guilty of "causing what distinctly amounts to hurt", and sentenced him to a fine of Rs. 30. Certain notices in the vernacular press drew the attention of Lytton to the case. At his request the Local Government asked the High Court of Allahabad to express an opinion on the sentence. The High Court stated that the sentence was not specially open to objection. Forwarding this answer, the Local Government declared that the case did not call for further action.[1]

It was then that Lytton wrote an indignant letter to the Government of the North-Western Provinces. "The Governor-General in Council cannot but regret that the High Court should have considered that its duties and responsibilities in this matter were adequately fulfilled by the expression of such an opinion. He also regrets that the Local Government should have made no inquiry, until directed

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1. Govt. of India letter, 12 October 1876, ap. Parl. Papers, 1877, LXIII, pp.343 et. seq.

to do so by the Government of India, into the circumstances of a case so injurious to the honour of British rule and so damaging to the reputation of British justice in this country". The letter went on to say that the groom's death had been undoubtedly the direct result of the illegal violence done to him by Fuller, the sentence on whom was wholly inadequate. It then expressed abhorrence at the "cowardly" practice of Europeans beating their Indian servants.[1]

The strictures of Lord Lytton, made public through the Gazette of India, aroused a protest from the High Court Judges,[2] and the Chief Justice recorded a Minute questioning the right of the Governor-General in Council to disapprove or condemn the Court's action on a judicial matter. The Minute contended that in the exercise of judicial powers the High Courts were subject to no authority but that of the King in Council.[3] Lytton disagreed with this view, and declared that the Governor-General in Council had been invested with "the entire responsibility of every department

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1. Govt. of India Letter, 7 July 1876, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, pp.351-2.

2. Letter from the High Court to the Govt. of India, 5 Aug. 1876, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, pp.353-9.

3. Minute, 18 Aug. 1876, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, pp.359-67.

and function of Government", including the administration of justice.[1] The whole matter was referred to the Secretary of State. Lord Salisbury warmly supported the action of Lytton with regard to the case of Fuller. He also repudiated the claim put forward by the Chief Justice. An important distinction existed between the status of the English and Indian Courts, he wrote. While in England the Judges held office "during good behaviour", the Judges in India held it, by the Act of 1861, "during Her Majesty's pleasure". The right to dismiss a person necessarily involved also the right to approve or condemn his action.[2]

Attacked by the Press Act the Som Prokash ceased publication. Commenting on its suppression the Bengalee said that the letter which had caused offence had come from a mufassil correspondent, and carried very little weight. The Government had, in fact, brought it into prominence. The paper went on to support statements made in the letter, and said that Lytton had really disappointed the hopes provoked by the Fuller Minute. It added that the language of the letter had been offensively intemperate, but similar language was often being used in public discussions in England. Some

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1. Govt. of India letter, 12 Oct. 1876, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, p.346.

2. India Office despatch, 22 March 1877, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, pp.371-3.

of Gladstone's remarks[1] would be highly objectionable to the Government of India. Writing on the British occupation of Kabul, for example, he had said: "Thus far we have been contemplating a pitiless display of Might against Right".[2] The opinion of Hunter seems to corroborate the point of view of the Bengalee in this respect. "The Indian journalist has only to reproduce paragraphs from English opposition papers", Hunter wrote on June 30, 1878, "in order to stir up feelings more damaging and more seditious than any of those quoted by Lord Lytton".[3]

It is to be noted that during the three years of its operation the Vernacular Press Act was applied against a very small number of journals, only two of which ceased temporarily to be circulated. This permits of two opposite interpretations - one that the Act was not required at all; that the sedition of which Lytton complained, and to combat which he had sharpened the sword of power, was devoid of objective reality; the other, that the Act served the purpose of a preventive, if not punitive, law, and effectively

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1. Bengalee, March 22, 1879.
2. Nineteenth Century, January, 1879, p.187.
3. Skrine, Life of Hunter, p.283.

suppressed the voice of disloyalty before it was uttered. Each of these inferences seems to tell only half the truth. The vernacular papers in general were not powerful enough to call forth a strong counter-attack. And during the years of 1879-81, the tone of their writings underwent no significant change. "Although some improvement has taken place in the style and language of the vernacular newspapers since the introduction of the Vernacular Press Act", the Bengal Administration Report for 1879-80 said, "their general tone is one of opposition to Government and Government measures".[1] In the following issue the Report commented: "The tone of the vernacular press differed but little from its tone in the previous year".[2] Yet the Act was needed as the means of regulating future political developments. The authorities were probably well-advised to arm themselves with a weapon which was bound to be useful in the future, though it hardly served any purpose at the moment.

In the spring of 1880, the Liberal Party came into power. The Indian political leaders were full of joy and expectation.[3] The Indian Association called a meeting to

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1. Report on the Administration of Bengal, 1879-80, p.502.
2. Ibid, 1880-81, p.452.
3. Bengalee, May 1, 1880.

express rejoicings, and adopt a memorial to Parliament praying for the repeal of the Press Act, and the Arms Act, for the retention of the cotton duties which had not yet been abolished, and for open, competitive Civil Service examinations to be held both in India and in England.[1] Subsequently, a deputation was arranged, chiefly through the exertions in England of Lal Mohan Ghose, to wait upon Lord Hartington, the Liberal Secretary of State.

Disillusionment came rapidly. It was learnt that Lord Hartington could not "agree to the hasty repeal" of the press law. The news was received by Indians with bitterness. The Bengalee hastened to pronounce "a heavy sentence of condemnation" upon the Liberal Government, saying that it had virtually broken its pledges. The paper added that the political morality preached from time to time by English public men was as empty as "sounding brass".[2]

Early in 1881 correspondence took place between the Secretary of State and Lord Ripon, the former suggesting to the Viceroy the advisability of repealing the Press Act.[3]

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1. Ibid, May 15, May 22, 1880.
2. Ibid, July 3, Aug. 21, Aug. 28, 1880, Jan. 1,1881.
3. Indian Office despatch, 28 Jan. 1881, ap. Parl. Papers, 1881, LXVIII, pp.737-8.

Ripon heartily agreed.[1] On December 7 a Bill was introduced for this purpose into the Supreme Legislative Council. Six weeks later (January 19, 1882) the new Bill was debated. Sir William Hunter, whose views on this matter differed totally from Munro's, delivered his maiden speech in the Council on this occasion, strongly supporting Ripon's proposals. After perusing the published evidence against the vernacular press, he said, he had deplored the special powers assumed by the Government. Such powers should not form a part of the permanent law of the land. The native press, ~~he said,~~ was the chief organ of representation in India.[2] It was "a Parliament always in session".

The repeal of the Press Act had no little psychological effect on Indians. They regarded it as the triumph of sustained agitation, and combination for a specified purpose.[3] The defeatist tendencies began to vanish. It became obvious that much could be gained even from a despotic Government by the mass pressure of public opinion. Lord Lytton had kindled indignation: Lord Ripon kindled hope. Regarded in the proper perspective, it

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1. Govt. of India letter, 28 Feb. 1881, ap. Parl Papers, ut supra, pp.741-2.

2. Proceedings of the Legislative Council of India, 1882, pp.40 et. seq.

3. Bengalee, Dec. 17, 1881; Report on the administration of Bengal, 1880-1, p.453.

would appear that Lytton, no less than his successor, helped to awaken the political consciousness of Indians.

Stirred by a new optimism, the Indian Association began to pass from the defensive to the offensive. Since the early months of 1881 it had been agitating for local self-government. The Bengalee wrote in the middle of that year that the movement had been spreading rapidly, and would, in a little time, sweep the whole of Bengal.[1] It added that the rulers of India would not confer the privilege for the mere asking, and that nothing but a strenuous and determined agitation could win it.[2] Ripon's Resolution of October 10, 1881, favouring the extension of local self-government was hailed with enthusiasm.[3] Objections, however, were taken to the details of the scheme on the ground that it was fettered by certain conditions which would imperil its success. Foremost among these was the appointment of the Magistrate-Collector as Chairman of the proposed Boards. It was also urged that the elective system ought to be adopted as widely as possible in the constitution of the municipal and local Boards.[4] Ripon's sympathetic attitude emboldened the political leaders to put forward a scheme for provincial

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1. Bengalee, June 18, 1881.
2. Ibid, Feb. 12 and April 9, 1881.
3. Ibid, October 22, 1881.
4. Ibid, May 27, 1882.

self-government. It was suggested that at least two-thirds of the members of Provincial Councils should be non-official. These non-official members should be elected by the people, and not nominated by the Government. For the time being an electorate might be formed of members of municipal bodies. With the advance of education the people should be given the right of sending their representatives directly to the Provincial Councils.[1]

While clamouring for an extension of political power, the Bengali middle class sought to strengthen its ranks by forming new alliances. For certain purposes it had built up a united front with the aristocrats; but when the rent law was being prepared,[2] it hastened to make use of the economic awakening of the peasants, who were demanding reduction of rents and fixity of tenure. A demonstration of ryots took place in Calcutta, in which many ryots addressed the meeting. The Bengalee complained that the demonstration had been viewed with displeasure by the authorities. A meeting in Nuddea, it was asserted, had to cope with the obstructive methods of the police, who had gone from village to village asking the ryots not to attend it. The Bengalee protested indignantly against this interference, and sounded

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1. Ibid, June 3, 1882.

2. Cambridge History of India, vol. VI, pp.249-50.

the alarm that the right of holding public meetings was at stake. "Irresponsible power arrayed against the forces of liberty and the voice of the people", the journal observed, "has always been vanquished, and as it has been in Europe, so will it be also in this country".[1] The Englishman gave its contemporary unsolicited advice on the matter. Bengali ryots, it said, were not versed in constitutional agitation. If the torrent was once set flowing against property rights and the landlords, the leaders of the movement would not only be unable to control the new force, but would be destroyed by it.[2] The Bengalee retorted that this was a pernicious doctrine, which meant that the ryots should never be taught what their rights were, but kept in utter darkness. Such a doctrine, it added, would have suited a slave-owner in America before the Civil War.[3] Public meetings of ryots continued to be held in different parts of Nuddea, Birbhum, the 24 Parganas, Hughly, and Burdwan. A meeting in Birbhoom was said to have been attended by 12,000 ryots. Associations of ryots were formed.[4] It would be a mistake to think that the Bengali middle class was the unhesitating champion of

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1. Bengalee, June 25, 1881
2. Englishman, July 4, 1881.
3. Bengalee, July 9, 1881.
4. Ibid, July 2, 1881 and Jan. ?, 1882.

the peasantry. But that class no doubt was seeking at this time to break the last relics of semi-feudalism, and establish a modern capitalist society. In spite of a temporary link-up, now and then, with the aristocrats, the middle class, stirred by ambition, was anxious to take over into its own hands the reins of political leadership. It was significant that when the Hindoo Patriot, the organ of the British Indian Association, declared the aristocrats to be the "natural leaders of society", the Bengalee made bitterly sarcastic comments, and stated that land and titles would not constitute a claim to leadership, but moral qualities and vigour of intellect.[1]

Till this time Indians alone had occupied the stage of political agitation in Bengal. But in 1883 that stage was invaded by a large body of the European community. Indians themselves stepped aside for a while and became the surprised spectators of an impassioned drama, seeking to draw from it useful lessons in technique. This development was the unexpected outcome of a Bill introduced into the Supreme Legislative Council for investing Indian magistrates and judges with criminal jurisdiction over European British subjects. Until 1872 a European British subject could be tried only in the courts of the Presidency towns. When the

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1. Ibid, April 29, 1882.

Code of Criminal Procedure was revised in that year, two important changes with regard to this matter were made. First, an extremely limited jurisdiction was conferred upon the district courts over Europeans residing in India: for instance, a Sessions Judge could sentence an Indian to death while he could only send a European to prison for twelve months; a first class Magistrate could sentence an Indian and a European to penal servitude for two years and three months respectively. Secondly, the equality on which all judicial officers, irrespective of race, had stood, was removed, and it was enacted that the new jurisdiction conferred upon the local courts was to be exercised only by European officials.[1]

An anomalous position threatened to be created in consequence of the second provision. There were Indians who had entered the Covenanted Civil Service by open competition in England. By 1882 two of them had risen to the position of first class Magistrates, and one to that of Sessions Judge.[2] Besides them, there were six other Indians in the Covenanted and Statutory Civil Services. What would happen if a

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1. Cowell, History of the Courts in India, pp.270-6.

2. R.C. Dutt was officiating as Magistrate-Collector of Backergunge. B.L. Gupta, Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta, was about to be transferred to the judicial service. S.N. Tagore was a Sessions Judge under the Bombay Government.

European British subject was charged with criminal offence in a district administered by an Indian? The Indian District Magistrate could neither try him nor even commit him for trial, but he would have to transfer the case to a junior European colleague, or else the offender would have to be tried by a European District Magistrate of another district. In either case, the prestige of the Indian Magistrate would suffer. There was also bound to be some administrative inconvenience, while material injustice to Indian officials might also take place; for, in practice, this position was likely to limit the appointment of Indians to districts which were inaccessible and rarely visited by Europeans.[1]

A protest against this state of things came first from a Bengali civilian named B.L. Gupta, who, as the Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta, already exercised jurisdiction over Europeans, but who would lose that jurisdiction in the following year, with his promotion to the more responsible post of Sessions Judge.[2] On January 30, 1882, Gupta wrote a letter to the Government of Bengal suggesting that Indian officials should be given the power to try Europeans. "If you do entrust us with the responsible office of a District Magistrate or of a Sessions Judge", he said, "do not cripple us in our powers.

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1. Hunter's Speech, ap Proceedings of the Legislative Council of India, 1883, p.195.

2. Appointed Sessions Judge of Beerghoom on April 7, 1884 (Bengal Civil List, July 1884, p.22).

The question affects seriously the efficiency of district administration".[1]

Sir Ashley Eden, then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, submitted the note to the Government of India with his approval, saying that the desired jurisdiction should be given on the ground of general policy as also of administrative convenience.[2] The Government of India considered the proposal favourably, and despatched circulars inviting the opinions of Local Governments. "An overwhelming concensus of opinion" supported the removal of the bar. It was generally admitted that Indian district officials should have equal powers with their European colleagues. The Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, Sir Charles Aitchison, proposed to go farther than this and to give all first-class magistrates, whether belonging to the Covenanted Civil Service or not, the power of trying European British subjects. Reviewing the papers, the Government of India sumbitted to the Secretary of State the outline of a measure by which, first, all District Magistrates and Sessions Judges would be vested with the required power by virtue of their office; and secondly, the Local Governments would be permitted to confer this power upon those members of the Covenanted and Statutory Civil Services who were, in their opinion, fit to be entrusted

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1. Note by B.L. Gupta, ap. Parl. Papers, 1883, LI, pp.653-4.

2. Bengal Govt. letter 20 March, 1882, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, p.653.

with it.[1] Lord Hartington approved of this proposal,[2] and on February 9, Ilbert, the Law Member, introduced into the Legislative Council a Bill to amend the Code of Criminal Procedure. Copies of the Bill were sent to some of the leading journals.

At once a furious opposition sprang up against the measure.[3] Three weeks later a great meeting of Anglo-Indians took place in Calcutta (February 28), attended by nearly 3,000, including a number of Civil Servants and Army officers. A Resolution was passed declaring that the Bill was "unnecessary in the interests of justice, uncalled for by any administrative difficulty, based on no sound principle, founded on no experience", and that it would imperil the liberty of European British subjects. The most provocative speaker at the meeting was a lawyer named Branson, who seconded the Resolution, saying: ~~that~~ "Englishmen will not hand over the custody of their liberties to such a nation as the

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1. Govt. of India letter, 9 Sept. 1882, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, pp.649-51. See also Punjab Govt. Letter, pp.662-3.

2. India Office despatch, 7 Dec. 1882, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, p.668.

3. W.S. Blunt wrote: "The only province which would have been at all seriously affected by the Bill was Bengal, where the English planters saw in it a check to their system of managing and mismanaging their coolies. I heard a good deal about this from some Assam planters ....., and I know that that is how they regarded it. 'It is all nonsense', these told me, 'to suppose that you can get on without an occasional upset with the niggers, and

Hindus of India". Thunders of applause burst out when he stated that the Bill was designed to take away not an Englishman's privilege, but his rights. Groans and hisses broke out at the mention of Ilbert's name, and the name of Gupta gave rise to derisive laughter. There was nothing but a sentimental motive, Branson asserted, for the removal of a grievance felt only by "a few blatant Bengali Babus". "The jackass kicketh at the lion . . . Show him that the lion is not dead; he sleepeth, and in God's name let him dread the awakening". (Cheers and shouts from all sides).[1] Branson's speech was a welter of words, supported only by sentiment, and not revealing one spark of reason.

Numerous other meetings followed in different parts of the country, and the Anglo-Indian Defence Association was formed with a fund of over one lac and fifty thousand rupees, in addition to a monthly income of Rs.1,000 from members alone,

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Continuation of foot-note on previous page:-

> our English Magistrates understand this. But if we had native magistrates, we should be constantly getting run in for assault". - Blunt, India under Ripon, pp.271-2.

1. Proceedings of a meeting, ap. Parl. Papers, 1884, LX, pp.697 et. seq.

at its disposal.[1] Memorials were sent to the Government. The whirlwind gathered strength and velocity, destroying inter-racial sympathies and raising the dust of prejudice. The struggle was carried into England, where a branch of the Defence Association was established, including A.J. Arbuthnot, and even Roper Lethbridge.[2] It received powerful journalistic support in the Times.[3] It also found support from Lytton and Salisbury. Speaking in the House of Lords on April 9, 1883, Lytton attacked the local self-government Resolutions as well as the Ilbert Bill, warning the House against Ripon's policy of "gradually transferring political power in India from European to Native hands". The Governor-General, he complained, had exceeded his authority by declaring that the people should undertake the management of their own affairs. Absolute government was as well fitted for India as Parliamentary Government was fitted for England. The new policy was striving to introduce into India the restless, dissatisfied spirit known as Radicalism. Then, criticising the specific proposal of the Ilbert Bill, Lytton argued in favour of privilege, citing as an illustration

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1. Englishman, Jan. 1, 1884.

2. Times, June 20, 1883.

3. e.g. Times, June 25, July 24, Aug. 2, Sept. 10, Sept. 29, 1883.

the right of a peer to be tried by his fellow peers. Europeans were not the equals, but the superiors of the races they governed, he asserted, and went on to claim that Indians themselves recognized this natural inequality. He further said that the quarrel between the Government of India and the non-official Europeans was a quarrel between partners whose interests were identical, and who were bound together by the strongest ties of self-preservation.[1]

Replying to this speech, Lord Kimberley, then Secretary for India, observed that Lytton had offered to his hearers a bugbear of his own imagination. "There is no intention to change the Government of India into a Representative Government". Ripon's policy was one which had been followed in the past - the policy of admitting Indians to an increased share in the administration of their country's affairs.[2] Speaking subsequently, Lord Salisbury supported Lytton. He stigmatized the principle, that no person was to be excluded from any appointment on account of his race, as "political hypocrisy". As to the Ilbert Bill, the whole question was, he said, what political effect it

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1. Hansard, 1883, vol. 277, 1735 et seq. Also Bengalee, May 5, 1883 and Englishman, May 16, 1883.

2. Hansard, ut supra, 1756, et. seq.

would have on the Europeans in India. It would be foolis Salisbury added, to gratify the legitimate ambition ofa few Indian officials at the cost of the dangerous hostility of the Europeans.[1]

The main theatre of opposition to the Bill was obviously not in England but in the country of its origin. The Anglo-Indian Press denounced the Bill with unexampled fury: the single exception was the Statesman, which, under the able guidance of Mr. Knight, boldly supported the measure.[2] Nowhere in India was the opposition so strenuous and powerful as in Bengal, where it had the warm sympathy of the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Rivers Thompson, an avowed enemy of the policy of Ripon. All the High Court Judges in Calcutta, excepting Mitter, denounced the Bill. The district officers were nearly all against it. The main opposition, however, came from non-official Europeans - lawyers, merchants and indigo planters. Lord Ripon became the subject of abuse and insult; the depth of the hostility to him can be gauged from the fact that a conspiracy was believed to have been set afoot to seize the Viceroy and send him back to England. It was even whispered that the Lieutenant-Governor was in the

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1. Ibid, 277, 1797 et. seq.

2. Times, June 25, 1883.

secret.[1]

Meanwhile, the Government of India had, in the ordinary course of business, referred the Bill to the Local Governments, High Courts and others for their opinions. The reports received might be summarised as follows:- Of the greater Local Governments, one (Bengal) desired the complete withdrawal of the measure, while four opposed its withdrawal, but suggested certain amendments; of the minor Administrations, four were totally against the Bill, and two suggested modifications. The opinions of the High Court Judges were divided. Of the district officers, the great majority advocated withdrawal; their views, the Government of India commented, were founded largely upon the opposition of the non-official European community.[2]

Some arguments used against the Bill were really racial in character. It was said that Indians were unfit to try Europeans.[3] But if this allegation was true, they were

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1. Buckland, Bengal under the Lieutenant-Governor, vol. 2, pp.787-8.

2. Govt. of India letter, 10 Aug. 1883, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, pp.687-8.

3. See, e.g., Letter from the Anglo-Indian Association to the Secretary of State, 7 Nov. 1883, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, p.725; and Letter from Lord Hick Browne to the Govt. of Bengal, 2 May 1883, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, pp. 290 et. seq.

unfit to discharge judicial duties at all: it was not a sound policy to employ good judges for Europeans and bad ones for Indians. Other opponents of the Bill did not ascribe general judicial unfitness to Indian judges, but urged that owing to their deficient knowledge of English habits and ways of thoughts, Indians were not in a position to do justice to European offenders.[1] Against this argument it was pointed out that ignorance of English habits had not prevented Indian Judges from giving satisfactory decisions in the civil cases in which Europeans were concerned,[2] while Indians had discharged their duties as Presidency Magistrates and High Court Judges without reproach. A third argument which proceeded from the Bench of the Calcutta High Court, alleged that no immediate necessity for the Bill existed, since it would affect a very small number of Indian officials, and at the moment the exigencies of administrative convenience could, in their opinion, hardly be pleaded.[3] Mr. Justice Mitter

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1. See, e.g., Madras High Court letter, 23 June, 1883, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, p.159.

2. Govt. of India letter, 10 Aug. 1883, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, pp.689-90.

3. Letter from the High Court, 23 May, 1883, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, pp.269-71.

recorded a separate Minute, supporting the Bill. He noted the fact that before 1872 Indian officers as such were not barred from trying Europeans. The socalled right of trial by a European had been created for the first time by Act X of 1872.[1]

It might be mentioned, in passing, that Indian members of the Civil Services supported the Bill, and expressed their opinions frankly to their official superiors, although the latter were solid against the measure. Among these were K.G. Gupta and B.N. De of the Covenanted Civil Service, as well as a number of Deputy Magistrates.[2]

In imitation of Anglo-Indian protests, Indian counter-demonstrations took place in many parts of the country. A joint memorial of the British Indian Association, the Indian Association, the National Mahomedan Association and other bodies was presented to the Government.[3] This counter-agitation was also carried into England. Meetings took place in London in support of the Ilbert Bill. The most important of these was presided over by Bright (Aug.1),

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1. Minute, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, pp.277 et. seq.
2. Notes, ap. Parl Papers, ut supra, pp.389, 336-8, 358.
3. Memorial, 8 March 1883, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra,p.553.

who said that the clamour against it was the outcome of jealousy.[1] Another meeting was presided over by Sir John Phear, who stated from his experience as a Judge of the Calcutta High Court, that Indian magistrates discharged their judicial duties with remarkable efficiency.[2]

The Government of India, however, bent before the powerful opposition of the European community. Having considered the numerous opinions and press comments, it came to the conclusion that the Bill should not be withdrawn, but modified. It proposed accordingly that jurisdiction over Europeans should be conferred on no Indian officials except District Magistrates and Sessions Judges.[3]

Lord Kimberley approved of the new scheme. The Bill had now been made so guarded and moderate, he remarked, that it might reasonably be expected to allay the excitement of the European community.[4] But nothing of the kind happened.

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1. Times, Aug. 2, 1883. Bengalee, Aug. 11, 1883.
2. Times, July 24, 1883.
3. Govt. of India letter, 10 Aug. 1883, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, pp.691-2.
4. India Office despatch, 8 Nov. 1883, ap. Parl. Papers, ut supra, p.724.

The partial success of their agitation encouraged the Europeans to continue their struggle more strenuously than ever. "The only course open to the Viceroy, the only compromise possible", wrote the Civil and Military Gazette, "is his resignation".[1] The fire blazed high, forcing the Government to search eagerly for a formula which would reconcile the Anglo-Indians to the main principle of the ill-fated Bill. Such a formula it discovered by the end of the year. The principle that no distinction should be made in the powers of the higher officers of different races was to be retained: but European offenders were to be given a new right - that of being tried by a jury, the majority of whom would be their own countrymen.[2] In this form the Bill was passed, and received the assent of the Governor-General on January 25, 1884.

The Government thus made peace with the Anglo-Indians by giving them a new privilege in exchange for an old one. Racial equality within the higher official class was established, but racial inequality among persons brought up for trial was maintained. The European offender, however trivial his charge, could still claim to be tried by his own

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1. Civil and Military Gazette, Nov. 19, 1883.
2. Govt. of India letter, 29 Jan. 1884, of parl papers, ut supra, pp. 851-3.

countrymen, forming a majority of the jury, though the Court might be presided over by an Indian District Magistrate.[1] This exclusive privilege was likely to be, in the opinion of the barrister, Lal Mohan Ghose, a source of injustice. In many parts of India, he said, it would be difficult to call together an English jury. Besides, the jury empanelled from the small local European community might easily be the personal friends of the prisoner: men who had displayed such intense race hatred in connection with the Ilbert Bill were not unlikely to be biassed in cases between Indians and Europeans.[2]

After this compromise the storm died away. The Government of India probably thought that it had retreated with dignity, but Indians thought otherwise. Meetings were held in many parts of the country condemning the "concordat" formed by the Government with the Defence Association.[3]

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1. Strachey, India, p.111.

2. Ghose, Speeches, 11, pp.72-3. Alfred Lyall is reported by Blunt to have said that the jury system could not work in Assam, since it would leave the planters "free to do exactly what they chose". See Blunt, op. cit., p.145.

3. Parl. Papers, ut supra, pp.785-7.

Not that the original Bill itself had been looked upon as a great blessing. Indians had welcomed it merely as an earnest of better things to come. A Bengali journal had spoken the thoughts of a great number of the people when it had said: "In truth, did not Mr. Ilbert's Bill hold out hopes regarding the future, we would not even cast a glance on such a small measure".[1] The extraordinary agitation against it was a great surprise, but a greater surprise was yet in store. The files of the Bengalee clearly show that Indians were convinced of the inevitable defeat of the Defence Association, and they would not have been so disgusted if they had expected any compromise. The great political lesson derived in January 1884 was that an engine of opposition could be built up, powerful enough to bend the Government under its pressure. Never before had agitation yielded such immediate results. The attack on the Vernacular Press Act during Lytton's regime had failed, and achieved success only when the Liberals who had been pledged to its repeal came to power. But the Ilbert Bill battle had been carried on in the teeth of the Government. The Anglo-Indians had challenged the ruling

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1. Times, July 9, 1883.

power, and gained victory by virtue of an audacity, disproportionate to their strength. True, they were fighting a Government composed of their own kinsmen, the one being bound to the other, as Lytton said, by an identity of interests. In marked contrast any political agitation of Indians would start at a disadvantage. But, on the other hand, it could become far more powerful than any Anglo-Indian movement if it could only gather together the whole of the Indian middle classes. The idea of such an organization began to develop rapidly in the Indian mind - the more rapidly since it was felt that even a sympathetic Governor-General could do little by himself; Anglo-Indians might baffle his plans, unless they in turn were counteracted by an Indian organization.

The Ilbert Bill was, so far as the Anglo-Indians were concerned, merely the match that set ablaze the accumulated gunpowder. The dramatic suddenness of the opposition was more apparent than real. Many Anglo-Indians noted Ripon's liberal policy with irritation. It is possible that they regarded the attempt to extend the structure of local self-government as "the first blow struck at their monopoly of power".[1] Certain other matters, though small, created anxiety and anger. Such were, as Bright said, the appointment

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1. Blunt, op. cit., p.272.

of R.C. Mitter/ as the acting Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court and of W.C. Bonnerji as the Standing Counsel.[1] The Times ridiculed the statement,[2] but it is borne out by evidence. When Mitter was about to be promoted, the Englishman wrote against his appointment, declaring that the direction of all departments should continue to be in the hands of Europeans so long as English institutions had not taken firm root in the country. It added that to place at the head of the judicial administration an Indian who had not been educated in England would be an act of injustice to Europeans, for whom the Judge could not have any sympathy, nor they for him. The appointment would be/distasteful to the European community, and "a political error", stirring up "heart-burning and dissatisfaction". It would in fact be "not the exaltation of the individual, but the lowering of a high office".[3] Five days later, the journal attacked Ilbert for having been "an active accessory" to the appointment. The "powerful class of European judges and barristers", it said, were "almost to a man" against the policy of the Law

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1. Times, Aug. 2., 1883.

2. Ibid.

3. Englishman, June 26, 1882.

Member.[1] The Government of India, the Englishman added on August 9, 1882, had promoted Mitter owing to an "unhealthy appetite for a little cheap popularity", while Ilbert himself suffered from a "perfid enthusiasm".[2] It appears that by the beginning of 1883 the Anglo-Indians were prepared for an outburst, and the Ilbert Bill was the climax of a series of measures generally distasteful to them.[3]

While the controversy was gathering strength, there took place a minor incident which was quickly invested with political significance. On April 2, 1883, the Bengalee accused Mr. Justice Norris of the Calcutta High Court of having committed sacrilege and hurt the religious feelings of the people by causing a family idol to be brought into his Court so that its age might be ascertained, compared him with Jeffreys and Scroggs, and declared him to be "unworthy of his high office". Steps should be taken, the journal suggested, to put an end to the "wild eccentricities of this young and raw Dispenser of Justice".[4]

Soon after, Surendra Nath Banerji, the editor of the paper, was served with a writ from the High Court to show

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1. Ibid, July 1, 1882.
2. Ibid, Aug. 9, 1882.
3. Blunt, op. cit., pp.269 et. seq.
4. Bengalee, April 2, 1883.

cause why he should not be committed for contempt of Court. The case came up on May 5 before a Bench of five Judges. The Court premises were filled with a great crowd seething with excitement and suspense. On the advice of his counsel Banerji had already submitted an apology for words written in a moment of heat. The Chief Justice read out the judgment on behalf of his European colleagues, sentencing the defendant to prison for two months. Mr. Justice Mitter dissented, and read out his own judgment, stating that a gross contempt of Court had been committed, but that the infliction of a fine was sufficient. He quoted the precedent created by Tayler's case, adding that the guilt of Tayler had certainly not been lighter than that of Banerji.[1]

The sentence was received with indignation by the thousands gathered on the streets, who exhibited their anger by smashing windows and pelting the police with stones, so that

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1. Ibid, May 12, 1883. The case of Tayler was as follows. In April, 1869, W. Tayler, a dismissed member of the Bengal Civil Service, wrote a series of letters to the Englishman refuting a statement made by Mr. Justice Dwarkanath Mitter, in course of the hearing of a civil suit, that he had "perpetrated fraud". The accusation, Tayler declared, was false. The Judge, he said, had "aggravated the wrong of an erroneous judgment by the far greater wrong of wanton insult and unfounded aspersion". He was summoned for contempt of Court, and, on submitting an apology, was discharged with a fine. See Englishman, April 7, 12, 13, 17, 20 (Overland Mail),1869.

five of them had to be arrested.[1] It has been stated that one of those rowdy youths was Asutosh Mukherji, subsequently so well-known as a High Court Judge and Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University.[2]

The news of Banerji's imprisoment created a great impression throughout India.[3] The demonstrations in Calcutta were so large that the crowds could not be accommodated in any hall, and meetings had to be held in the bazaars. Thus began the open-air political meeting, so common in India today. The movement was no longer confined to the educated community, but began to spread among the masses. The great indignation that swept through Bengal rose not merely out of the fact that a well-known Bengali editor had been sent to prison: it was a counterpart of the Ilbert Bill agitation in which Mr. Justice Norris had been prominent. The sentence was regarded as an act of vengeance unbecoming the highest Judicial Bench.[4]

The Anglo-Indian community had performed an important task. By snatching victory almost from the jaws

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1. Englishman, May 5, 1883 and Jan. 1,1884.

2. Banerji, A nation in making, p.76.

3. The Calcutta correspondent of the Times cabled: "If the agitation goes on increasing as it has been doing for the last three weeks, it will prove a source of serious embarrassment to the Government" - Times, June 4, 1883.

4. Banerji, op. cit., pp.78-9.

of defeat, it had taught a bitter, necessary lesson to Indians, making them see more clearly than ever the futility of political effort without widespread, united action. The idea of Mazzini preached from the platform and the press had transformed itself from a gaseous into a solid, palpable form. Unity and organisation was the cry of the day. But the Indian Association was an insufficient instrument, representing the leadership of Bengal, and having failed to attract the political elements of the other provinces. During the rule of Ripon Bombay had developed a new political force, and was prepared to challenge the Bengal leadership. The eastern province, however, made yet another attempt to hold its own. At the end of December, 1883, the first National Conference took place in Calcutta. "It was the reply of educated India to the Ilbert Bill agitation, a resonant blast on their golden trumpet", Surendra Nath Banerji wrote. But the trumpet was blown by Bengal, while the other provinces merely listened. The main question discussed were Representative Councils, education and the wider employment of Indians in the public service.[1] The Conference was attended by Wilfrid Blunt, the author of "India under Ripon".[2]

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1. ~~Banerji, A Nation in Making~~, p.86.

2. Blunt, op. cit., p.114.

While the objective forces thus matured, a Scotsman sat on the hills of Simla, watching with keen anxiety the strengthening and interlocking of Indian political currents. Allan Hume, a Secretary to the Government of India, had noticed the dangerous clouds that had appeared after the passing of the Vernacular Press Act, had seen them burst into storms and create new streams, and the question had rung in his ears: What is going to happen next? He had pondered, and found an answer, clear and terrifying. From that day Allan Hume began to make his plans. He waited until his retirement from service before taking action. On March 1, 1883, he started his work by addressing a manifesto to the graduates of the Calcutta University, asking them, as "the most highly educated of the nation", to scorn personal ease and struggle for a greater freedom and for a larger share in the management of their own country's affairs. He went on to describe the framework of a proposed organization, to be known as the Indian National Union.[1]

The appeal served its purpose. At one stroke Allan Hume made his way into the hearts of educated Indians. He was hailed as a friend, and round him the politicians began

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1. Wedderburn, A.O. Hume, pp.50-2.

to gather. The Indian National Union was formed, with Hume as General Secretary, and it was arranged that a Conference would meet at Poona. In the meantime, a Preliminary Report was issued to members, containing suggestions which were claimed to be the result of discussions with "all the most eminent and earnest politicians of this Empire". The most important of these suggestions was that the "key note" of the new institution should be "unswerving loyalty to the British Crown". The "continued affiliation of India to Great Britain, at any rate for a period far exceeding the range of any practical political forecast", was to be "absolutely essential"[1].

The self-imposed task of Allan Hume was to curb the growth of unrest, and to divert the dangerous currents of Indian political consciousness into pacific channels.[2] It appears that while initiating the new national movement he was disposed to turn the reforming passions on to the social side. But it was apparently on Lord Dufferin's advice that he took up the work of political organization from the beginning.[3] Hume also desired that the Conference of the new association should be presided over by the Governor of Bombay, in order that

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1. Ibid, p.53.

2. Ratcliffe, Wedderburn, p.54.

3. Wedderburn, op. cit., pp.59-60; W.C. Bonnerjee, Indian politics, Introduction, p.vi; A.C. Majumdar, Indian National Evolution, pp.55-6.

a chain of friendship might bind the Indian politicians to official classes. Dufferin welcomed the proposal, as showing the desire of the National Union to work in complete harmony with the Government, but he considered that difficulties would arise if a high official presided over such an assembly.[1] This idea was therefore dropped.

The majority of the members of the new organisation disliked its name, and re-christened it the Indian National Congress. The outbreak of cholera at Poona prevented the Congress from holding its first session there in accordance with plan. Instead, it met at Bombay, on December 28, 1885, with a Bengali barrister, W.C. Bonerjee, as president. There were seventy-two delegates present, and a number of distinguished official and non-official visitors.[2]

The political drama which had begun after the Mutiny moved with slow action during the sixties, only gathering speed and complexity after 1872, and reaching its climax in the tempest raised by the Ilbert Bill. The Indian National Congress was in fact an anti-climax, but a most

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1. Wedderburn, op. cit., p.60.

2. Majumdar, op. cit., pp.62, 64-6. For Hume's account of the origin and aims of the Congress, see Hume, A speech on the Indian National Congress.

significant one. It signified above all the increased solidarity, the united front, of the middle classes of Bengal and Bombay, Madras and the Punjab. These classes had at last found a common laboratory, as it were, in which to formulate and develop their political ideas, and a common platform from which to preach them. And it is essential to remember that the middle classes held political ideas far in advance of those of the aristocrats. They believed, for example, in the wider application of the principles of democracy, in the curtailment of privilege, and in the equality of opportunity. They wanted to draw out the people from their age-old shell of apathy, so that these might form a vast mass round the central nucleus of the educated community. They were in a mood for bold experiments. So, after the December days of 1885, the question began to loom large: would the middle classes succeed in giving to politics what they had been giving to the press and to literature - a continuous infusion of new blood?

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